

S 712.0914
3

Australia's Monthly Magazine of the Performing Arts

FEBRUARY 1982

THEATRE

PRICE \$1.95

a u s t r a l i a

*New Plays
for '82*

*Sharman
Looks Ahead*

Mad Max II

*Exhilarating
Dance Theatre
in Adelaide*

**MICHAEL
EDGLEY**
*-Australian
Barnum*

**AMAZING
EVENTS**
*-Festival
Opera*



Death in
Venice — 1980



The Energetic Australians

Energy for Australia is our business. Encouraging energetic Australians is our pleasure. Funding and sponsoring Australians with the drive to go places in sport, community affairs, the performing arts and higher education. Helping turn a power of energy and talent into a wealth of human achievement. All part of what we mean by our slogan "Better Energy Management".



Caltex (UK) Petroleum Pty. Limited

THEATRE CONTENTS INDICE australia

Theatre

INFO	4
SHOWBUZZ/ <i>Norman Macmillan</i>	9
THE WORLD OF HARLEQUIN/ <i>Theatre Pacific</i> 11	
NEW PLAYS FOR 82: <i>New work coming up by DOROTHY HEWITT, BARRY JACKINS and STEPHEN SWEET</i> /Michael Le Messager/ <i>Sweeney Spenser's Fairytales</i>	12



THE DIRECTOR AS CATALYST/ <i>how Sweeney talks to Michael Manks</i>	17
EDGLEY — AUSTRALIA'S GREATEST SHOWMAN/ <i>Michael Edgley, in the Australia's answer to P.T. Barnum?</i>	19



INTERNATIONAL/UK/ <i>Draw No cards/USA/ Karl Lennart/ITT</i>	22
REVIEWS/ <i>Norwegian reviews of the holiday period fare</i>	27
GUIDE/ <i>All that's happening this month in theatre</i>	39

Opera

INFO	42
AMAZING EVENTS/ <i>James Macdonnell looks at the history of opera at the Adelaide Festival</i>	43
REVIEWS/ <i>Ken Hughes on Aida and others</i>	46
GUIDE/ <i>What's on in opera</i>	48

Film

INFO	49
ANGELA PUNCH McGREGOR <i>talks about her career with Elizabeth Robb</i>	50
REVIEWS/ <i>Best of 1981's Most Men: 7 and more/Elizabeth Robb</i>	52



GUIDE/ <i>Listings of the best films currently on offer</i>	54
---	----

Dance

INFO	55
PINA BAUSCH AND THE WUPPERTAL DANCE THEATRE/ <i>Bob Schenck</i>	56



REVIEWS/ <i>Merrill Wain and Phyllis Venn/Bob Schenck</i>	58
GUIDE/ <i>This month's dance events</i>	60

Music

ST CECILIA AND THE HOLIDAY FARE/ <i>Fred Manks</i>	61
--	----

Books

INVASIONS OF AUSTRALIA/ <i>John McCallum</i>	63
---	----

SYDNEY DANCE COMPANY

NEW ADDITIONS



OPERATING HOUSE FEB 18-MAR 20

Editors:

Contributing Editors:

Dance

Opera

Film

Performing Canadian

Art Director

Subscription Manager

Robert Page

Larry Wagner

Jul Solov

James Macdonald

Elizabeth Kibbett

Philip Mason

Alan Craft

Cliff Kamei

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kim Taylor Robert Page (Ch) Philip Parsons

Larry Wagner

ADVISORY BOARD

The above, plus John Bell, Graham Blundell, Katherine Brisbane, Brett Cohen, John Clark, Michael Cosgrove, Jack Hubbard, Garrie Hutchinson, John Newby, Phil Meyer, Raymond Ormrod, Ron Satchman, Maria Thérèse John, Timothee Coulton-Worby, Richard Wherrett

ADVERTISING

1st Floor 151 Darling Street, Potts Point 2011

(02) 217 1280

STATE REPRESENTATIVES

ACT: Janet Henry (062) 48 3649

NSW: Patricia (02) 157 1100

NT: Suzanne Somers (08) 387 3451

Qld: Jocelyn Robinson (07) 217 2559

WA: Margaret Schwan (09) 341 1176

SA: Michael Morley (08) 275 2204

Theatre Australia gratefully acknowledges the financial assistance of the Theatre Board of the Australia Council, a statutory body of the Commonwealth Government, the New South Wales Cultural Affairs Advisory Committee, the Arts Grants Advisory Committee of South Australia, the Queensland Cultural Activities Department, the Victorian Minister for the Arts, the Western Australian Arts Council and the Institute of the University of Newcastle

STANDARD EDITING

Manuscripts and editorial correspondence should be forwarded to the editorial office, 1st Floor 151 Darling Street, Potts Point 2011. Tel (02) 217 1280

While every care is taken of manuscripts and visual material supplied for this magazine the publishers and their agents accept no liability for loss or damage which may occur. Unclaimed manuscripts and visual material will not be returned unless accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope. Opinions expressed in signed articles are not necessarily those of the editors.

ADRESS EDITORS

The subscription rate is \$20 post free within Australia. Cheques should be made payable and sent to Theatre Publications Ltd, 1st Floor 151 Darling Street, Potts Point NSW 2011. For advertisement and overseas advertising rates see back page

Theatre Australia is published by Theatre Publications Ltd, 1st Floor 151 Darling Street, Potts Point NSW 2011. Distribution outside Australia is handled by the New York Publishers Ltd, and is arranged through the American Film Institute, New York.

In printing this issue we have used 100% recycled paper. The paper is printed by 100% recycled paper. The paper is printed by 100% recycled paper.

The paper is printed by 100% recycled paper. The paper is printed by 100% recycled paper. The paper is printed by 100% recycled paper. The paper is printed by 100% recycled paper.

COMMENT

Arts Lobby Success

The work around by the Government in granting the Australia Council an extra \$809,000 to subsidise gave everyone in the subsidised arts world happier Christmas. The change came as a response to lobbying, superbly orchestrated by the Confederation of Australian Professional Performing Arts (CAPPA), a delegation of actors and writers, and the behind the scenes presence of the new Australia Council Chairman, Dr Timothy Pascoe. The Theatre Crisis Day—the most visible and public demonstration of arts concern—served better as a focus and to galvanise the efforts of theatre companies than as an effective force in itself.

It seems that far from wanting to do the arts down, the Government just did not appreciate the particular efforts of its actors. As a whole block—in including money to film, the National Gallery etc—the slice of the budget in the arts has kept pace with inflation—an increase from \$40 to \$90 million as a block in the Fraser period. But within that the Australia Council's portion has dropped from 34% to 35%.

Ironically, the Council itself has been a clogged channel for subsidy. Seen in the past as unreliable, torn by internal strife and too fat in terms of its running costs, it was thought that any increase in arts money fed through it would only increase the problems. Timothy Pascoe views the supplementary funds not just as a triumph for the arts world, but a coup for the Council, endorsing its decisions, policies and restoring its standing in

the Government's eyes. To maintain and consolidate this new found favour, he is putting through a major reorganisation of the Council's hierarchy, working to trim down the administrative structure, and is attempting to rebuild the role of private advice ("that means you can't be public critic too"), involving politicians in the detailed policies and planning for arts funding.

While everyone is delighted by Home Affairs Minister Ian Wilson's statement on the supplementary funding, the news release misleadingly suggests that additional funds "will enable the Australia Council to fully restore funding to all arts organisations whose funding is cut out". In fact for the Theatre Board, the total needed to restore the eight companies cut completely was \$336,000 when for 1982 they have in fact received only an extra \$193,000. Embarrassingly, the release adds "unless it judges on artistic grounds it should not do so" (ie restore funding). Theatre companies faced with only partial restoration of funds at the Board's February meeting may feel they have been found wanting on artistic grounds when the real reason remains one of lack of money.

1982 remains a challenging year for the arts. The Council's move to take up one of its major responsibilities as advocate to the Government for the arts, and CAPPA's proven effectiveness in galvanising and orchestrating the arts lobby are positive signs. Certainly it has been brought home to the Cabinet that it has to look more carefully and particularly at its funding for the arts.

TRUST'S OZ CONTENT

For 1982 the Elizabethan Theatre Trust seemed to be facing a 50% cut in funds, but it came out that throughout money has been reduced from the \$285,000 of 1981 the outgoing is nothing like so whopping. It has received a base amount of \$134,000, will collect its \$28,000 Challenge Grant release with the potential to raise \$20,000 more on the show for one basis and has an amount of \$80,000 specifically earmarked for Australian content.

General Manager Jeffrey Jayenson Smith, welcomes the reduction. "Up till now we have had to push the commercial product so that somewhere along the line we could present Australian material. Now the ti-wi-do-well at the box office part has been removed." Their major commitments in 1982 are Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet Season (over 3000) then what Jayenson Smith fondly terms "Anthony's Choice", namely Peter Rausch's Wuppertal Dance Theatre and the Piccolo Teatro di Milan, and finally a now assured strong Australian commitment.



Anthony Steel

Artistic Director, Anthony Steel, has sold hopes for what with a limited amount can be done. "We will be spreading it (funds) in an average at the end of the year to show we have done a lot with a little and used the money intelligently and wisely. It is almost more important for the Trust's future than its direct outcome in 1982."

When the first challenge up on *Caliban Arrows* was \$180,000, the whole \$80,000 could easily go on one production — a Sydney season of the ADT, for instance. Spreading it thinly, though, would allow

the Trust's name to be associated with a wide range of activity. So far, firm commitments have not gone beyond a small involvement in the Human Venn Sydney showing, but they might consider bringing *Sparks* to a small NSW venue and *Alto* could easily have had a Melbourne staging if Mel Gibson had been available. Equally, though, similar ventures could be moved between state capitals away from the Sydney/Melbourne axis. Now is the time for groups to board the Trust with suggestions.

Interestingly, in the face of recent boasts of choice, Trust backing, some surprising instances have been put together which reveal that, despite the general view of mature overseas content, the ACT's record of Australian involvement for the four years 1977-80 has been considerable. Excluding two fully imported shows, the Old Vic from London and the Acting Company from New York, there were 18 productions only seven of which had substantial overseas content. No less than 84 were directed by Australians. The proportion of actors is even higher, 126 out of 131 were local, with the 11 "others" being involved in only 177 out of a total of 1,314 performances. Playwrights fared less well with only four of the shows being locally written. The \$80,000 special allocation will go some way to redress this in 1982.

AWARD TO SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY

Four years on and the Sydney Critics Circle Annual Award for "significant contribution to theatre" is still currently the only award given to members of the theatrical profession.



Richard Whelan

This year's went to the Sydney Theatre Company, selected from an onslaught of Graham John Bell, Nick Knight, Rodney Fisher, Barry Otto, Brian Thompson, and the STC.

KEMP'S DREAM

Lindsay Kemp, who mesmerised, intoxicated and occasionally enraged Australia in the "He with his production of *Flowers* — based on Gertrude's *Our Lady of the Flowers* — a back in the country once more.

He started his national tour in Brisbane last month, proceeds to Melbourne and then Sydney this month and Adelaide and Newcastle in March. As well as *Flowers* the company are also performing Kemp's new creation *The Dream*, based on a Melbourne Night's Dream with Lindsay Kemp playing Puck. The company received a commission in 1978 from the Teatro Eliseo di Rome and the Teatro Nazionale di Milan to mount a production on a Melbourne Night's Dream and they put this together during an Italian tour of *Flowers*. Premiered in Rome that October it was successful from the start and has been twice refined and reworked ever since.

"What I want to do with the theatre is to restore the glamour of the Folies Bergères, the delights of the circus, the promise of rock'n'roll and the shiver of death," says Lindsay Kemp.

NEW MOON OVER QLD

Aspetta's only professional touring drama company opened in Cairns on January 27. The Central and Northern Queensland Theatre Company is now, more theatrically, known as New Moon Theatre Company.

Its first season opened with Reg Livermore and Patrick Flynn's *Wet Kelly* — the electric movie show first staged in Adelaide in 1977 — directed by Terry O'Connell and designed by David Bell. Each production plays Cairns Civic Centre, Townsville Civic Theatre, Mackay Theatre Royal and Rockhampton Pilsbarn Theatre. After June the company intends to expand its touring circuit to more exotic distances.

Their first productions are Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (director Peter Rausch, designer David Bell), the Australian premiere of *No*



Peter Barclay, David Macdonald and Peter Berridge — New Moon Photo: David Wilson

Orchestra for Amos Macdonald by Christy's writer Robert Arthur MacDonald (adapted from the thriller by James Hadley Chase and directed by Tony O'Connell with designer Anthony Babcock) and the Australian premiere of the rock opera *Jenny* by Pete Townshend and The Who (director Peter Barclay, designer Anthony Babcock).

New Moon has a resident ensemble of actors: Robert Arthur, Valerie Bader, Bob Barnes, Stephen Clark, Debra May, Margaret Moore, Wayne Pigeon, Kris Ralph, John Roth, David Sandford and Joe Spence. Michael Elliott is lighting designer, Alan Kadogo is movement director and Ross Brewer is sound designer. Peter Barclay and Tony O'Connell are New Moon's Artistic Directors and Paul Roca is General and STC Adelaide General Manager.

The company has received commercial sponsorship from The Shell Company of Australia Ltd, MIM Holdings Ltd and BHP. The Theatre Board grant is \$79,000. Queensland Government contributes \$79,000 and there are box office guarantees from five city and three council theatres totalling \$115,000.

QTC IN 82

As most theatre companies, faced with massive Federal funding cuts, look for areas on which to save, the Queensland

Theatre Company is meeting the challenge of a 20% drop in income with an intentionally aggressive policy. Apart from a reduction in their Tanglefoot season (and three plays to two only seems to confirm that the board sees this alternative way as the last that must not be seen to swing the dog) the company under Alan Edwards has unveiled all its cards to meet the storm and in a policy of which President Roosevelt in their recent hit, *Amos* might have approved, opted for increased employment and greater output. A high profile programme of plays for 1982, a large proportion of which require sizable casts and high production costs, is being mounted by a commitment to up the already formidable volunteer list and other attempts at giving the way, such as wiping the fiscal business drastically with a scheme of non sponsorship.

The year kicks off with *Wells Bush*, continuing the practice of beginning with a musical that will get the subscribers to bite. A commendable step has been taken however in hiring Shelia Bradley, a Brisbane possessor of enormous musical comedy talent, from the local theatre restaurant circuit to play the lead. Many believed that she was the natural choice for the lead in *Gypsy*, two years ago, which instead went to a teenage queen with downstream results that are now part of QTC folklore.

Next comes O'Neill's masterpiece, *A Lie for a Woman* and *Night*, which, even if it is pulled down from its original five

hours, is a bold and exciting choice, the QTC had a great success with their last O'Neill Robert Lewis's 1980 production of *Murder My Sweet*. There are two recent Australian pieces, Upson's *The Windhorse* and the more remarkable *Easton*, by Ron Easton, plus a third of the November slot, usually left empty until late in the year, is filled by Williamson's *The Perfect Storm*. Eduardo de Filippo's sixth war-torn treatise to comedy of family crisis and celebration, *Savento*, *Savento* (Mozzi) should prove popular, as should Shaffer's *Amadeus*, though I must assume that the revised version is being well had the QTC's notoriously erroneous board got a whiff as it were of the play's scatological secrets. I am sure they would never have given it the nod of approval.

The heroic stand is rounded off by *The Tempest*, an open air production for the Commonwealth Games Festival '82 and for which provides Shakespeare-in-the-park, has been tried runs. There may be unprecedented success in performing a play dealing with the theme of colonial domination in the midst of what may turn out to be a volatile undercurrent, certainly if the Hon Ross Hume's participation in anything to go by. All the same, one wonders how many Brisbaneans will be around to see the production and how many will have fled the boards and headed for the coast.

The QTC have again chosen to appoint not an associate director but an assistant with limited responsibility. Corp. Giorch, an

actor with the company in minor roles for some time, follows Peter Duncan in this position. With fairly limited directorial experience, he will be responsible for *The Harbourer* and one of the *Tangerine* shows. The other is in the hands of Duncan Watt, an actor of experience and standing with the company and one of the few to be on a twelve month contract this year.

THEATRE ACT IN CANBERRA

George Whaley has retained Canberra's Fortnase Theatre, and announced a series of productions. First for the new Theatre ACT will be Whaley's own adaptation of Steele Rudd's *On Our Selection* with Michael Roddy as Dad and John Davies as Dave. It opens at the Playhouse this month, and will be followed immediately by Ron Elnick's *Ensemble*.

After an *Anzac Day* special at the War Memorial, the company will present a large-scale children's show at the Canberra Theatre, and will finish the year with another double season at the Playhouse. Whaley hopes to involve Don Asker's *Hippies* Vinn dance company in a small-scale adaptation of *Peter Grac*, to be given

in conjunction with *Hamlet on Ice*. Some lunch time plays are also likely.

Whaley's audition classes, held during November and December, attracted 55 hopefuls, six or eight of whom will work with Theatre ACT in 1982.

EINSTEIN IN SYDNEY

Frederick Panlow, one of Australia's most talented actors, will be coming to Sydney to perform in the Melbourne Theatre Company's production of Ron Elnick's highly acclaimed play, *Ensemble*.

Panlow is well known to Melbourne though not to Sydney audiences. His performance as Einstein earned him best performance of the year from Age theatre critic, Leonard Radic, and he has just completed a successful season in the MTC production of *Amadeus*, playing Salieri, the arch rival of Mozart, in Peter Shaffer's multi-award winning play.

In the play *Ensemble*, the great scientist is facing imminent death. His confronted by the changing patterns of his life — by narrow images of his embittered, dedicated youth and his much honoured, stagnant middle age. His great intellectual feats, that are accompanied by failures in personal

relationships, and his stunning flashes of discovery, that are followed by years of false directions and disappointments, justify for his interests.

Ensemble has a cast of three. Frederick Panlow who plays Einstein aged 75 years, Garry Down plays Einstein aged from 40 to 66 years, and Roger Oakley who plays Einstein from 36 to 40 years. The play is directed by Bruce Myles and designed by Richard Price. It starts at the York Theatre, Seymour Centre, on February 4.

CHANGES...

Stephen Barry resigned from the National Theatre, Perth during December last year and will be returning to England to take up a position there.

John Lurie, Marketing and Promotions Manager at the AETT for the last seven years, has left the Trust to set up in business on his own. He will still be retained by the Trust, though as Marketing and Promotions Consultant and his new company will be the Trust's official advertising agency. Soon after George Whaley left NIDA to head the Fortnase Theatre Company in Canberra, Ian Cookley, Head of Production at NIDA, left to rejoin the technical staff at the MTC and Peter Kennedy, who has taught history

Frederick Panlow as Einstein



of flower and directed plays at NIDA for the past seven years, has rejoined the profession as a freelance actor/director, and returns on theatre. **Tony Barbery** has become NIDA's new Dramaturg. **Barbara Allen** (previously Publicity Officer at La Bonte), has moved on to become Community Arts Officer for greater Brisbane and **John Maxwell** has taken her place at La Bonte.



Peter Corns

CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE CENTRE

A de-consecrated church in Hawthorn, one of Melbourne's gentler suburbs, houses the Contemporary Performance Centre, Melbourne's newest, and in the parlance of restaurateurs, most ambient venue, with its high vaulted ceilings of polished pine, resonant wooden floors, stained glass windows overlooking a mezzanine gallery. The proportions are generous and the acoustic rich. It looks full with a hundred people but can seat up to four hundred.

Established and entrepreneurship by the Random Drama Department, it is the brain child of an Artistic Director, John Ellis, who said that "Its programme will be developed gradually with the emphasis on a relatively small number of projects operating under optimum conditions, including the opportunity to workshop and rehearse in the space, and will variously involve professional companies, educators and talented students. These projects will include intensive experimental workshops, ongoing research and innovative productions."

Like the Mill Theatre in Geelong, the Contemporary Performance Centre affirms the strength and aesthetic integrity of refurbished theatre spaces. It is ideally suited to its far demands, productions that take space seriously and we can look forward to discover and designers rising to the challenge and inspiration it offers.



Contemporary Performance Centre. Photo Graham Pitt

ANOTHER NEW COMPANY IN WA

With three or four new theatre companies springing up in Perth during 1981 — and not all surviving to tell the tale — the Swan River Stage Company seems to be setting out on quite a different task. Its principal objective is to develop, through workshops, new plays using WA talent.

The company's first season is composed of two plays — *The Dreamers* by Aboriginal writer Jack Davis, a detailed portrait of urban Aboriginal life and beyond that about dreams, death and the survival of the individual and the community. The second is a children's play, with songs, by Volker Ludwig for the Festival of Perth/Mount Lawley Children's Festival of Performing Arts called *Max and Ash*.

group will explore the plays from the inside. As well as all this, there will be experiences to historical sites associated with the plays and access to one of the world's best Shakespearean stage history colleges.

The tour is organised by the Department of Adult Education, University of Sydney in conjunction with the Shakespeare Institute of the University of Birmingham. The cost of \$2,900 includes air fares, three-star accommodation with breakfast, all tuition, excursions and theatre tickets. Further information is available from Ms D Drake, Adult Education, University of Sydney, 692 2907.

SHAKESPEARE STUDY TOUR

Theatre tours usually involve visits to a succession of famous theatres — "If this is Thursday, it must be La Scala" — with performances thrown in. The Shakespeare Study Tour is entirely different. Its object is to study the plays in performance and it is designed for those who want to do more than just sit and watch them. The group will see performances by the Royal Shakespeare Company in London and Stratford, but that is just the start of the process. There will be lectures on the plays and post-performance seminars conducted by leading scholars and critics, sessions in which the group can talk with the practitioners about their work, backstage visits and workshop sessions in which the

THEATRE

Australia

WE
HAVE
MOVED

Please note the Editorial Office of
Theatre Australia is no longer at
36 Clarence St, Sydney.

Our new address is:
1st Floor,
Elizabethan Theatre Trust Building,
153, Darling Street,
Parramatta NSW 2151
Telephone: (612) 357 1200



15 NEW RELEASES FROM POLYGRAM CLASSICS

FULLY IMPORTED



**LIVE FROM LINCOLN
CENTER
THE CONCERT OF
THE DECADE**

Sutherland • Pavarotti
Horne • Sonyage
2 CD D255D2 DIGITAL *\$24.00
2 CD K255K22
DIGITAL *\$28.00

**LIVE FROM
BAYREUTH
THE BOULEZ -
CHEREAU RING**

16 CD 6769 074 DIGITAL *\$175

**GIUSEPPE VERDI
A WAGNER BALL**
Donizetti • Macario • Ottaviani
• Brown
Chorus and Orchestra of La Scala,
Milan
Classical Academy/Conductor
2 CD 2740 261 *\$30.00
2 CD 2733 113 *\$30.00

**MYRTON BURLIOT
REQUIEM**
Florida Chorus • Texas
Chorus • St. Anthony's of Paris
David Barnham - Conductor
2 CD 2737 128 *\$32.00

**WILHELM F. MAERZELS
MIGUEL
ARMANDO IN ARIA**
Nelson • Baklan • Nathan
Jager • Scherer
Salzburg Chamber Choir
Salzburg Musicverein Orchestra
Leonard Haydn/Conductor
2 CD 2746 261 *\$30.00

POPULAR SONGS
Jose Carreras, Texas
English Chamber Orchestra
Beaul • Ken Martin, Moline,
Stapleton/Conductors
4 CD 6759 261 *\$44.00

**JULIA MARSHALL
WORTHEN**
Carreras • Pavarotti • Allen
• Eastman • Lloyd
Orchestra of the Royal Opera
House, Covent Garden
Colin Davis/Conductor
2 CD 6759 261 *\$33.00

**JOSEPH HAYDN
THE SCARONS**
Mach • Jernigan
• Vanden/Conductor
Academy of St.
Martin-in-the-Fields
Neville Martinson/Conductor
2 CD 6759 261 DIGITAL *\$30.00

**GIUSEPPE VERDI
IL TRIONFATORE**
Borghetti • Cammaro
Orchestra of the Royal Opera
House, Covent Garden
Colin Davis, Conductor
2 CD 6759 261 DIGITAL *\$30.00
2 CD 6759 261 DIGITAL *\$30.00

**JOSEPH HAYDN
L'ESPRESSO DELLA
MORTE**
Mach • Jernigan • Ahrens
• Erdos • Jernigan
Chamber Orchestra
Academy of St. Martin
2 CD 6759 261 *\$30.00

**SEBASTIAN MICHAELIS
SONGS AND MELODIES
BY BACH • BEETHOVEN
• MOZART • MAASNET**
Jana Sutherland, Soprano
Richard Bragg, Piano
2 CD 6759 261 *\$30.00

**RICHARD WAGNER
TRISTAN AND ISOLDE**
Mach • Jernigan • Ahrens
• Erdos • Jernigan
Chorus and Orchestra of the Welsh
National Opera
Reginald Goodall/Conductor
2 CD 6759 261 DIGITAL *\$30.00
2 CD 6759 261 DIGITAL *\$30.00

MY OWN STORY
Luzanne Plowright, Singer
2 CD 6759 261 *\$11.00

RETAIL
1991 LIVING ARIAS FROM
FEDORA • METISTOFELE
ARMINA LECHE • FLORIE
CAPRICANA • WERTHER
ANDREA CHENIER
FANCHULA DEL WEST
MANIAN LERCAUT

Luzanne Plowright, Singer
National Philharmonic Orchestra
de France • Jernigan
Conductor
2 CD 6759 261 DIGITAL *\$30.00
2 CD 6759 261 DIGITAL *\$30.00

*Recommended retail price
ALL SHIPPING CHARGES
DELAYS NOTWITHSTANDING



Marketed in Australia by PolyGram Records



After *Barnum*, the next big American musical we may see is *42nd Street*, the smash-hit extravaganza glorifying the songs from bygone, bygone Broadway and Hollywood musicals. It opened at New York's 1825-seat Majestic Theatre in August, 1980, and is well booked out six months ahead, with a \$156 million advance, as it nears its 600th performance.

Helen Montagu, Australian-born London and New York based entrepreneur, was here in December stringing up Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide theatres capable of staging this big show and also with auditions large enough to be economic for such a costly production. Looks like *Her Majesty's* for Sydney and the Palace for Melbourne, with late this year or early next the date.

I understand this will be the first, and probably the only independent production outside America permitted by US producer David Merrick, who has a profound respect for Australian showbiz knowhow. Elsewhere, Merrick will probably insist on staging the show himself. It's of interest that his own number two company does not open till next December, in Chicago.

Helen Montagu also now has Robyn Archer under her wing and will present a revised and retitled version of *A Star Is Born* in May. She says Robyn scored in London last year by not proclaiming herself a star, as another Australian contender did, but opening modestly in a small venue and leaving it to the critics themselves to "discover" her talent.

Good news for MLC Theatre Royal Company director Frederick Gibson was that Mark Medoff's *Children of a*

Lesser God, which he will stage here this year, was chosen as the best play of the 1980-81 light season by the Society of West End Theatres. This drama about the love of a speech therapist and his deaf mute pupil, which also collected best acting awards for its two stars, Trevor Foe and Elizabeth Quinn, beat a field that included Peter Nichols' *Pamoa Play*, Brian Friel's *Translations* and Simon Gray's *Quartermain's Terms*.

The new Andrew Lloyd Webber concertaria, *Cats*, was selected as the best musical, beating *Barnum*, *Our Mo' Time* and *New Little Whorehouse*.

On Broadway, as here, there appears to be investment money available for musicals, but very little for drama and earnest theatregoers must look to Off and Off-Off Broadway for more substantial fare. Fortunately for them, the scene there this season is reportedly one of outstanding theatre of expansive stage and source, the offerings including American, British, Chinese-American and Americanised Japanese.

Wot? No Australian? So it seems, which is a pity, considering the wealth of local material available. For example, most of the nine one-acters staged jointly by the King O'Malley and Sydney Theatre companies last year were well worthy of wider audiences than those that jam-packed the Sydney Stables Theatre every night. Here, maybe, is fresh scope for the World Theatre Exchange. Many of the



Ruth Crawford — *Chinatown* in London

new US pieces, to judge by the reviews, would do well here.

As Australian Opera tickets get dearer and dearer, the New York City Opera has reduced its prices by 20 percent for its season opening at the New York State Theatre on February 26. Some stall seats will be as low as \$12 and the gallery \$4. The move follows a 1980 boom to a top price of \$25 which increased the dollar intake,



New York production of *Children of a Lesser God* — the play scraped the awards in London

but cut subscriptions from 67 percent of capacity to 30 percent.

In contrast, the Met Opera next door is still averaging a \$37 top and holding subscribers to a 40 percent capacity.

On the home front, however, opera remains most popular of the performing arts at Sydney Opera House. Annual report statistics show that 135 performances drew 146,973 patrons for an average 91 percent capacity. Ballet's 127 performances had 146,544 patrons for 90 percent and drama brought 143,072 to 383 performances for an average 75 percent capacity. For film, 1027 screenings attracted only 14,986 viewers, an average 24 percent of capacity.

At a recent opening at the *Nimrod* Dancesales, a manager asked the audience to "squeeze up a bit" because, he said, it appeared they were going to have "a very full house." There is no such thing. A theatre has 40 many seats and when they are occupied it is a "full house." Management should sell no more tickets than there are seats, allowing always for the bringing in of extra chairs and the use of spare space on stairways. I know every theatre needs every seat and



Robert Decker — opera in London

there is nothing more satisfying than being part of a capacity audience. But please, in the name of reasonable safety and comfort, never a "very full house."

Ad Adas

■When *The Fantasticks* opened on May 3, 1960 book and lyric writer Tom Jones hoped for 100 performances, composer Harvey Schmidt that it would run through the weekend. At New York's Sullivan Street Theatre on December 30 it notched up its 9000th performance.

■A legit adaptation of New York author Helene Hanff's delightful book *84 Charing Cross Road* opened in London to warm glances from most critics.

■Actress Jessie Matthews, who died last August aged 74, left a portrait and bust of herself to London's Tate Gallery and her wardrobe to the National Theatre.

■London revival of *Sound of Music*, at times playing to a standing-room-only 101 percent capacity, is selling tickets for June and beyond.

■Ruth Cracknell spent Christmas in London as a house guest of entrepreneur Helen Montagu.

■When the musical *Cassidy*, which the *Nimrod* now plans to present, was first staged many years ago, J C Williamson's, then in its heyday, rejected it as too primitive for Australian audiences.



peter albrecht corporation

DESIGNERS AND MANUFACTURERS OF
ARCHITECTURAL DEVICES
POWER FLYING SYSTEMS
COUNTERWEIGHT SYSTEMS
STAGE FURNISHINGS
CURTAINS, CYCLOPAMA, ETC.
ELECTRO MECHANICAL DEVICES FOR THE
INDUSTRY
SPECIAL CONTROL SYSTEMS
THEATRICAL COMPONENTS

peter albrecht corporation

325 EAST CHICAGO STREET
MILWAUKEE
WISCONSIN 53202 USA
Telephone 414-272-2911
Telex 26-855 ALBRECHT ML
TELEPHONE 414-272-2911
TELEX 26 855 ALBRECHT ML

223 PARK STREET
SOUTH MELBOURNE
VICTORIA 3205 AUSTRALIA
TELEPHONE (03) 899 6371
TELEX 37507 PACAL

The World of Harlequin



John La Morte and Columbo from the *Piccolo Teatro di Milano*

The Festival of Perth and the AETT are bringing to Australia for the first time Italy's most famous theatre company, *Piccolo Teatro di Milano* — formed in 1947 to preserve and develop the great Italian tradition of the *commedia dell'arte*.

The production, *Harlequin and the Orders*, is dedicated to the history and world of masks, so in that extraordinary chapter in the history of Italian theatre that began somewhere in the Middle Ages, and had an heyday between the 16th and 18th centuries.

It created and combined, with unsurpassable critical and expressive bite, the fundamental types of the Italian society of the time, making them the protagonists of an endless series of picturesque and significant adventures, the characters of a universe that reflected the opinions, moral codes, hopes, fears and problems of the real world.

Harlequin (or more correctly Arlecchino) is the protos of the *Commedia* characters. He is the poor servant, always hungry, who cannot but live on a day-to-day basis, naive as a result of his lacking any prospects, made astute by necessity, lute and frisky in self-defence, a procurer to satisfy the market demand, a thief in order to get justice.

The others, then, are "the others" from the despotic master to the easy, threatening soldier and the doctor who intimidates him through his use of Latin quotations, these characters represent the social powers and classes in whose hands the people were but a passive instrument.

The play is a collection of cues and texts from various epochs, famous jokes, extracts from shows which figure in the history of the Milan *Piccolo Teatro*, such as the ever-lasting *Servant of the patron* (The servant of two masters). It tells the story of this

emblematic character from his origin, confused with that of other servants, to the full delineation of his peculiar personality, achieved firstly through the anonymous dramatic approximations of the early *commedia* troupes and, subsequently, through Carlo Goldoni's scripts.

This production has the man regarded as the greatest Harlequin of this century, Ferruccio Soleri, leading the group of actors from *Piccolo Teatro*. He trained at the National Academy of Dramatic Art in Rome, searching texts, prints of the time and the making of the masks themselves, but, he says, "Arlecchino was for me still a mask without a face" until 1959 when I saw for the first time Arlecchino played by Marcello Moretti in an unforgettable performance. For me it was a revelation. On stage Arlecchino had lost the stereotyped and conventional character of the mask and gained immeasurably in human terms — fleshy, peasant-like, rustic, an authentic and popular character.

"My Arlecchino slowly took shape like a living person, absorbed into the society in which I live in and where Arlecchino can represent, both on the psychological and emotional level, not so much a model as the human sensibility. This is why I think my Arlecchino, that is based in and cannot entirely leave the great 'human' portrayal by Moretti, has become 'human' — the image of a man fighting in two worlds with all the contradictions, cunning, and middle-class man."

Rarely do we get to see the finest exponents of a major theatrical form, such as *commedia*, in Australia. Its impact has been enormous all down the centuries, but with the present concern with skills and action, as against word, *commedia's* influence is undimmed and as its pure form remains enthralling, enlightening and engrossing theatre.

Soleri will be appearing with the *Piccolo Teatro di Milano* at the Perth Festival from February 24 to March 6. The company will then perform at the Canberra Theatre, Canberra, from March 9 to 13. A special extended season has been arranged for Sydney by the Elizabethan Theatre Trust and the Perth Festival and will be held at the Seymour Centre from March 13 to 27.

Theatre Australia Special Feature- NEW WRITING IN 1982

BARRY DICKINS

Alsation Mimic and Playwright



by Suzanne Spenser

Barry Dickins was born in Reservoir, and for a time he lived in Carlton when it was still cheap. In recent years he's lived in St Kilda near the laughing jaws of Luna Park and now in a decaying block of flats in Prahran. On his letterbox there's a padlock and an engraved and curled aluminium name plate which reads, "Alsation Mimic-Len H. Don lives here".

On the door of his flat there's a drawing of a long snouted chap and beneath it, "Home of Barry Dickins, opening bar for *The Dead*" Inside there's a large colour TV set (courtesy of four articles for *The Herald*), a mangy kraut bear, two large framed photographs of blo, and a collection of presumably significant books — *The Horse's Mouth*, *Pickwick Papers*, *Steppenwolf*, *The Myth of Sisyphus*,

The Heart of Darkness and very little else.

We drank beer and mineral water from red and yellow spotted tumblers which Barry produced from his green plastic shopping bag, and he talked. Dickins always looks poor, on good days he just looks less poor, almost always he's just getting over something or just coming down with something, he has no teeth and the seat of his pants is always shiny, if it's there at all. He's rarely happy, almost invariably pained, and even when he tells you his woes, as he always does, he makes you laugh. And, no matter what, he writes. In Melbourne there is no writer more prolific, except perhaps Roger Palters, whom Dickins not surprisingly regards as his shadow.

Barry Dickins has written more than 14 plays since his first, *Ghost*, was staged at La Mama in 1974. His latest, *The Sadness of Lovers Lower* opens this month at The Playbox.

In 1978 his *Flash Shot Hotel* shared the APG Playwrights Competition with Stephen Sewell's *Tramors*. In 1979, he received a 12 month Literature Board Fellowship, and since then he has been writer-in-residence at La Mama, the Victorian College of the Arts and in January this year he became Playwright-in-residence at The Playbox. Last year his plays, *The Death of Menne* and *The Banana Bender* were published in the Theatre Australia New Writing series by Currency Press.

He is a regular newspaper columnist and cartoonist and at present has comic series and cartoons in *The Age*, *The Herald*, *The Review* and *The Melbourne Times*, and is about to appear in *Voguer*. He contributes fantastical book reviews to JAR, to wit, "Mandrigo at Merric Creek", "The History of Presson" by Manning Clarke, and last year his autobiography, *The Gift Of The Gab* was published. He also writes poetry in the manner of Dylan Thomas, does lovingly detailed cartoons and caricatures for the proprietors of his plays, often paints his own sets and has

directed and acted in his own plays.

Despite all this he is barely known outside Melbourne. There were a couple of productions in Sydney last year but he still feels rejected by the Sydney theatre establishment. His three productions at The Playbox, *The Death of Minnie*, *The Golden Goldenbergs* and *The Investigation of Angel* all played to capacity house in the small upstairs theatre, but so far there's been no show downstairs and *Lenore Lower* against just Dickens upstairs? — "If theatre is Ludo, what do you have to do to get a game?" He says he's sick and tired of playing to small theatres — "I want to see a couple of hundred people laughing."

Dickens' plays are peopled with eccentricities, plain eccentrics like Mag and Rag in *The Horror of The Suburban Nature Strip* who take turns at being the budge and playing on their twang, peering themselves, or pilloried eccentric students like the man who has his teeth ripped out by the managerial dentist with the bolicutters in *The Ruston Teeth Show* or Ken Wright, the boy who can't speak with the elf's head above his belt in his best plays — *The Brutal State*, *The Death Of Minnie*, *The Golden Goldenbergs* and *Lenore Lower* — they are raging eccentrics who defy death even as it is about to take them.

His heroes are all tragic comers, mad men of the people: Mo, Lenore Lower, Tony Hancock and Leary Bruce — most of them Jews. Dickens has an industry affinity for Jews, years of being around Acland St and the cheap boarding houses in St Kilda only partly explains it, the real reason lies more in his identification with the particular comic imagination of the dispossessed. He has a similar feeling for the disinherited rural battlers and itinerant workers and his comedy has consciously invoked and paid tribute to a working class Australian comic tradition, many of his short newspaper pieces are written in the style of Lower, and he has erred Dad and Dave and relocated them on a vacant lot beside George.

The play about Lenore Lower has been Dickens' passion for years now, never has he done so much research or so many drafts, of all his eccentrics Lower is the closest to himself. For Dickens, Lower is the ultimate journalist, and the play is opening with a benefit night for the AJA. "Lower emulated every class from cabbies and waitresses to intellectuals who read Gorki and Dostoyevsky, yet the higher echelon of the grosser sort at him now and say he was a drunken bum."

Denis Moore will play Lower and Dickens is hoping to direct it himself, though The Playbox has assigned it to Rex Cramphorn. Dickens says it will be refined theatre craft but he wants it to be

be "rough as guts, all broken glass and smashed teeth, a baganille of sight gags, pratfalls, routines and such dances with crutches . . ."

Afterwards, Almost Managing have plans to take the show to Sydney for a season at the Bondi Pavilion. Meanwhile Dickens is writing a new show for Anne O'Shannassy who starred in *Our Woman Star* at La Mama last year, and he's begun a play about Leary Bruce in Australia.

Recently some schoolkids doing a project on cartoonists, wrote to him and he sent them a drawing and the immortal advice — "Always start with the nose hairs".

HEWETT

New Romance With The Past



by Michael Le Meignan

One of Western Australia's best-loved exports, playwright Dorothy Hewett has exchanged the wide open space of her native WA wheatbelt for a town house in Sydney with a constant Cicaphony of traffic, from two of the city's busiest streets.

It was not a question of the grass being greener: for the few professional playwrights in Australia, the town is

not particularly lush on either side of the cultural dingo-fence.

A commission such as the one Dorothy Hewett has received from the Perth Playhouse, for a new play to premiere at the 1982 Perth Festival (9 February to 6 March) is worth approximately 5% of the average fee paid for an Australian feature film script. Further royalties in the form of a share of box office revenue usually

do little to make up the deficit, unless the play is exceptionally successful.

Dorothy Hewitt freely admits that the only play so far that has made her any money has been *The Man From Mukinupin*. Rodney Fisher's lively production of that play for the STC played in packed houses for a six week run at the Sydney Opera House, and other productions were mounted in Adelaide, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth, where it formed part of WA's 150th anniversary celebrations. The play is all too ready the thing with which to pay the rent.

One of the few things Dorothy Hewitt has in common with Ernest Hemingway is an ability to write brilliantly about places she has left. Mukinupin, like Dylan Thomas' village in *Under Milk Wood* had a wonderful authenticity of observation, as well as a deeper, more poetic truth.

The new play, *Fields of Heaven*, as she says, quite different from *Mukinupin*. It's set in the same area but different in theme, in tone and in style. It is a romantic tragedy set in the Champs Elysees of the WA hinterland.

The main theme is a love story about the destructive power of sexual love. A secondary theme is the destruction of

the environment, by greed and by the impact of agriculture. It is also about immigrants, Italian immigrants who arrived in WA in some numbers during the play's time-scale, 1929 to 1938, to work, to settle or as prisoners-of-war from Egypt.

The hero of *Fields of Heaven* is Romo Balthus, who arrives in WA shortly before the Great Depression. A naive follower of the Italian fascist poet, Gabriele d'Annunzio, his revolutionary enthusiasm has led him to be culled from Italy. In 1929, we find him working for a prosperous wheat and sheep farmer called Tom Barrow.

In the best traditions of romantic literature, the former has a beautiful daughter, with whom the Italian promptly falls in love. And she with him. Now Tom Barrow has highly progressive ideas on conservation and re-afforestation and the like, but being of a frugal nature, he has no intention of wasting a perfectly good daughter on the hired help.

Poor Louise is sent away to finishing school and the Italian, a somewhat ruthless and ambitious realist, sees his sights a little lower and marries the daughter of a smaller farmer next

door. Louise comes home, unsuspecting on the day of the wedding.

But they still find each other irresistible, and the affair continues as before. Louise, equally ruthless in her way, becomes pregnant to force the situation to an explosion. Her plan fails because the Italian backs off. His new wife nobly steps into the family breach and offers to bring up Louise's illegitimate son in her own. Defeated and heartbroken, Louise is despatched to Europe to study painting. Her exile and isolation is completed by the eruption of the Second World War.

Back in Australia, the Italian is making his fortune and Tom Barrow is taking to the bottle. By the time Louise comes home, the family property is up for sale and she has to fight for their survival. Her adversary is the only man she has ever loved, aided by the 16-year-old son she has never been allowed to acknowledge.

Those readers who fear I may have spoiled their enjoyment of the play by revealing too much of the plot may rest assured that there are many more twists and turns before a bitter-sweet conclusion. It is a rich story, unashamedly melodramatic and yet full of subtleties, by *Woolsey Menzies* of *Good With the Word*, and if Dorothy Hewitt's script is as good as her plot, it could be a masterpiece.

Les Marrons and Natalie Bale from Sydney will join the Playhouse company to play the two leads, who are required to age from 28 to 50 and from 16 to 38 respectively in the course of the play. The WA cast includes Joan Sydney, Alan Cassell and Pat Shevington.

Asked by the Playhouse management to suggest a director, Dorothy Hewitt had no hesitation in choosing Rodney Fisher — "He's my favourite person to work with." They are both delighted to continue the successful collaboration which began with *Mukinupin*.

One problem in Perth will be the small Playhouse stage, but they intend to keep the scenery as open and undisturbed as possible, to maintain the necessary illusion of huge skies and space. Looking to the future, they are hoping to persuade the Sydney Theatre Company to put on *Fields of Heaven* at the Opera House in 1983. The export of West Australian wisdom, warmth and wit continues.



Rodney Fisher's production of *Mukinupin* (left) and *Fields of Heaven* (right).

Photo: Jenny del Corral

STEPHEN SEWELL

In Conversation With Anthony Barclay



"The individual has ceased to exist in the sense that the word individual has previously been understood, this coming at a time when because of outmoded forms of social relations the individual appeared to be the final mode of existence possible and moreover these two contradictory movements developing with the same pace and from the same source so that now the only meaning is no meaning at all for if there is any meaning it can only be found in social reality. . ."

Sewell's pro/epilogue, a monologue from Sewell's *Witness The Bright World*

Katharine Brisbane in "A New Era" (24 May 1981) defined two elements she found that our new dramatists shared — she included Sewell in this group "Looked as dispassionately a new intellectual kind of cruelty is creeping into our theatre, a cruelty that has not been there before, because it points the finger of accusation at the audience . . . (they have) a second quality . . . in common . . . they are sometimes impatient with the dramatic means of discovery and want to shake us into caring."

Stephen Sewell "I don't really understand the concept of cruelty as such . . . to me much Australian writing of the 70's was droll, caricature and satire. It strikes me that the theatre, the writers, are behind, not leading the audiences. My intention is to express as clearly as I can the kinds of contradictions operative in

our society (and the individuals who are part of it) in the process of transforming it."

SEWELL AND THE IMPACT.

Jeremy Ridgman's claim that *Witness* was the most performed new Australian play of 79-80 is difficult to dispute. (APG April 79, Nimrod February 1980, Canberra Playhouse, July 1980, La Bonte, August 1980, Darwin, August 1981) One can draw one's own conclusions from that, but it is indicative of how Sewell powered his second major work into our theatre, and above all, powered an ambitious, richly dramatic work, that was as assured in form as in content. Yet that content was especially political and intellectual, avoiding the marshlands of farce or easy satire, grounded solidly, uncompromising, demanding. And that was new in our theatre.

Of course, not everyone liked the work. One critic, who at least admitted she thought Lenn and Sauln were pretty much the same person, found it all "good clean Agatha Christie" — a response that I find cringing, if not extraordinary. Or (as Ridgman tells us) the infamous first night at La Bonte which saw the departure of some dozen audience, one of whom felt sufficiently inspired to leave a "gob of phlegm" on the stage. At least that is some index to the diffuse passions Sewell can inspire. Or, for this writer, the marvelous Nimrod opening under the very steady hand of Neil Armfield which drew such

excellent performances from Michele Fawdon, Barry Otto and the irrepressible Max Gillies.

Witness drew fairly good responses from its recent outings in London at the Hampstead Theatre (directed by Neil Johnston). But Sewell is relatively deferential about all this — especially the critical response. To him it reflected a kind of cultural/national chauvinism, if you like, that an Australian playwright could move with ease among such complex socio-historical material. No critic challenged the integrity of the play's content. Sewell, though, tempers any discussion of this by more interested in the differences between Australian and British audiences and contends the harsher political realities facing the latter may have mellowed the "shocking brutality" of the Leibesher-Kness torture scenes. But even the more astute Australian audiences (those short on gobbs of Brisbane phlegm) saw this as the play's concrete or physical image of a brutal specific problem set in a specific country at a specific time. Not that *Witness* left one without unnerving insights into the behaviour of our own liberal democracies — a matter that Sewell is attending to in *Witness The Bright World*.

SEWELL: THE BACKGROUND.

We are all of us familiar with the unorthodoxy of some of our better

playwrights' backgrounds (Wellington's = engineering, Hubbard's = medicine), so with Sewell. He graduated in 1974 from Sydney University in Science and Maths. Of University "back-work, companions, abstractions that occurred away from contact with the specifics of time and place." It's a point that Sewell returns to again and again.

He does not suggest that play-writing was arrived at by any conscious decision. But now, at least, he is very articulate on what a playwright should be about. "One" committed to a deep involvement with the forces that are transforming society, and to much more besides" (FA Jan 1981). A brief but unmissable hint of writing at the Stanley Palmer Culture Palace took place in 1974-75. But then Sewell travelled North to develop an association with La Boie commencing more or less in 1976 and culminating in 1978 in the production of his first full length play *The Father We Loved Or A Good By The Sea*. This world premiere opened in July — an uneven performance, directed by Jeremy Ridgman. La Boie was experiencing uneven artistic programming and the play was identified by one national critic as well as the local Brisbane press. The result — fairly poor houses.

But *Father* had another, more successful, run earlier this year by the Griffin Theatre at the State in Sydney. Through the cast tended to be uneven and parts of it were over-written, its power was undeniable, it deserves a fully professional outing in the future. (For those interested Sewell says the work has no autobiographical material — it is a series of observations of Australia from the 30's to the present day.)

During 1978 the ABC commissioned a work that was to eventually become *Thruout* and this brought Sewell South again. This year he took up writer-in-residency at Nimrod from July to December.

THE NIMROD RESIDENCY.

The close association that developed with Arnfield and members of the Nimrod Company during *Thruout* meant that Sewell was involved in Nimrod affairs prior to his official writer-in-residency. That Nimrod's

changes of policy have attracted a great amount of media flak this year would be an understatement and it is precisely this "media" slant about which Sewell feels passionate. He admits the recent loss of the four women from the Nimrod staff is a definite set-back, but argues that a process of re-definition from artistic policies to audiences for whom the work is to be presented art issues that all theatre companies must face — sooner or later. Nimrod did so in 1981.

He points out rightly that while the Women-and-Theatre project attracted most flak that the Downstairs box-office had overwhelming success. Even if its audiences were the converted, all Nimrod provided a theatre that was not to be found elsewhere in Sydney and that had much to do with the drive and energy of Chris Westwood. Of course his *Belles Dames* of Nimrod did not sing or seduce all — those pale knight-at-arms brought up on a steady diet of early '70's Nimrod were left alone and looking, the sedge withered from the lake. Of course my point could be flippant but it is not entirely so intended. Re-definition of the role of a theatre to its society can result in everything from the banal to the brilliant and, at best, the music is contentious. For now.

To Sewell the issue of more or less equal female/male parts in plays is a simple matter of justice. And that does not end at the theatre stage — it is an issue that extends deeply into our society. The three female roles in *Wolcome* are a testimony to this challenging, demanding part.

And one cannot critic Michèle Fawcett's powerful, tormented performance as Anna in *Thruout* from the mind. Two readings of *Wolcome* are enough to convince me we are in for a similar treat — but that is a matter I will leave for the individual to decide.

SEWELL'S BRIGHT OR BRAVE WORLDS?

Sewell has been working on *Wolcome* for 18 months now and as I write the play's final act is being revised. He admits he finds writing a difficult task and has freely made draft copies of the script available to Arnfield and any other Nimrod company members interested. He also listens attentively to the advice of friends whom he

considers to be more politically and intellectually astute on the content and detail of his plays. There is a fitting sense of the co-operative at work here, though this is never allowed to degenerate into free for all contributions.

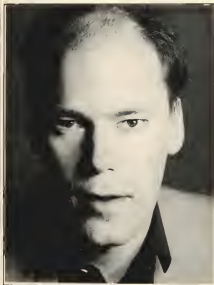
The next project is a company effort to be entitled *The Atom Prison* which Nimrod will stage next year (probably April-May). Direction after that is not certain but he admits to a desire to follow up a broadening interest in the Pacific/Australian region and to write a comedy on social democracy. At this point it seems that Arnfield could be involved in these works.

If Sewell is uncompromising — or perhaps demanding — this can be an actor's delight and an audience's pleasure. *Wolcome* is set in contemporary Germany with all the very contemporary contradictions of liberal democracy — a subject that could touch on the raw nerves of those concerned about the direction of Western society. To Sewell the play dramatizes issues which exist in the lives of real people, but issues he believes we are not paying enough attention to.

To Sewell we live in an idealistic society in the proper sense that we deal with abstractions that avoid real issues and, above all, the blatant contradictions that surround us. Interestingly Sewell admits to one very personal contradiction. He hates theatre with all its trimmings and trappings. Yet later in our conversation he readily admits to an advantage over film. Of all art forms, theatre carries most intellectual weight (with the singular exception of books), with its budgets that are not overwhelmingly large and, above all, with its potential air of liberation as it brings together a body of individuals as performers and spectators. But perhaps that is not entirely a contradiction. For herein lies Sewell's strength as a dramatist not purely of ideas per se, but as one who looks and observes with the power to absorb and ground real people and things as they operate in real life. From "gob of phlegm" to high critical praise, Sewell is one who provokes his audience with the passion of his concern. Whatever one's persuasions it is his integrity that makes him one of our most compelling young writers.

The Director As Catalyst

JIM SHARMAN LOOKS AHEAD



by Michael Morley

About the only plans of Jim Sharman's which have not been successfully realised in the last months were those for his own jet-away-from-it-all Christmas holiday. But he still seemed to be facing the prospect of Christmas and New Year in Adelaide with a commendably sanguine outlook not to mention the good-humoured patience with which he faced my intrusion on what was undoubtedly a well-earned break from his responsibilities as Director, both of the 1982 Adelaide Festival, and of the re-organised Lighthouse State Theatre Company.

But this, too, is precisely one which aspires well both for the Festival and the future of Lighthouse — given Adelaide's penchant for savaging any cultural figure who gives the merest hint of being more concerned with the responsibilities of his job than with cultivating the media. Not that Sharman downgrades the need for PR or a something he has had to learn over the past months, and although his style might in some respects be termed "low-profile", it is nevertheless distinctive and individual.

One has only to look at the layout of the Festival brochure and note some of the offerings to realise that in both form and content, his attitudes and preferences are clearly on view, and, while no Festival Director wishes to single out special children (the Fests will all too readily infer that other offerings are only fill-ins) it is clear that he has a particular interest in the

success of the Edward Hopper exhibition and the Pina Bausch dance company. He is reluctant to classify the Festival in terms of a theme, but has own current concerns — with the narrative and visual modes — are reflected in these two events, and, indeed, in works like the *Sam Sheppard* play and the TV event.

At the same time the 1982 Festivals were overtly contemporary in style than its predecessors. This is in keeping both with Sharman's attitudes and with the view of his predecessor, Christopher Hunt, that the 1980 Festival would be the last to follow the more traditional European models. Not that Sharman discounts the need for cultural links with Europe: he is no advocate of a haphazard "tribalism" policy. But he does feel strongly that "the older cultures' central drive is toward museums to hold the triumphs of the past": one needs to acknowledge that Australia can be seen, in terms of art and culture, as somewhat like a third-world society. And what should be important in the Festival are events with a relationship to Australia, and with an impact that would last beyond the Festival fortnight.

He sees his own role — both within

the Festival and in the development of Lighthouse — as a catalyst, and is intent on giving Australian musicians and actors the opportunity of working with distinguished overseas practitioners. Hence the invitations to David Hare to direct his own new play with the Sydney Theatre Company, and to Mark Elder and Ronald Zollman to work with Australian orchestras.

This mix of the old and the new, the traditional and the experimental, the European and the Australian is evident also in the plans and program for Lighthouse. In spite of all reports to the contrary, he has not turned his back on the classics: after all, the new season includes Shakespeare, Brecht and Kleist, along with Louis Nowra and Patrick White. And he is looking forward to working on *Mykissener Nephew's Dream* in particular, seeing as he does, "the production of the classics as informing the work of the present."

But hard and fast categorisation is not for him: the interaction between "high" and "low" culture is crucial, provided it is not pursued self-consciously. And any major theatre company with a progressive outlook must still start with a repertoire that will display to its prospective audience a

combination of the familiar and the adventurous. If there is one common denominator for the season it is that of "romance and reality" and the search for imagination and emotion in the theatre. The move into new territory comes, he feels after *Master Courage* with Bill Harding's new (and first) play, *Silver Lining* — "a rather anarchic comedy about what happens to Chekov's Three Sisters during the Russian Revolution, when they find out that everything they've been complaining about in the original play turns out to be positive advantage — not the least being not getting to Moscow!"

And the last project for the year — *Royal Show* — will also be the first to take advantage of the company's permanent flexible structure. The plan is to workshop ideas and sketches, with the company throughout the year, and the final script will be written by Louis Nowra in close collaboration with the performers. The hope, at this stage, is to break away from the traditional play format with this project, and to involve the members of the company — designers, musicians and performers — in every stage of the process.

LIEDER SOUTHERN REGIONAL THEATRE

Goldsmith Street, GOSFORD NSW (048) 21 5666

Director, John Speyer

A semi-professional company, assisted by the Theatre Board of the
Australia Council (statutory body of the Commonwealth Government)

Feb. 17th to 20th, 24th to 27th, March 3rd to 6th
THE UNEXPECTED GUEST by Agatha Christie.

April 14th to 17th, 21st to 24th, 28th to May 1st
HOW THE OTHER HALF LOVES by Alex Aycock.

June 2nd to 5th, 9th to 12th, 16th to 19th
ROMEO AND JULIET by William Shakespeare.

"A town less than a town the size of Canberra is fortunate to be able to
entertain such a talent-product as after production" — *Canberra Times*
"The number of good actors who live in, or can be trained in this large
country town is remarkable" — *Theatre Australia*
"I never cease to be amazed at the way John Speyer is able to draw the
best from his cast in each play" — *Evening Post*

UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

*Shakespeare
study tour*

9 - 29 May 1982 \$2,900

- Three-Star accommodation in Stratford and London
- Visits to Royal Shakespeare Company productions
- Lectures & seminars by leading scholars & critics
- Sessions with members of RSC & backstage tours
- Workshops and excursions

For further information contact Ms. Debbie Dubois,
Department of Adult Education, University of Sydney

(02) 692 2907

MICHAEL EDGLEY

Australia's Greatest Showman

With the opening of the Australian production of *Barnum*, the musical based on the life of the American entrepreneur who became known as the world's greatest showman, inevitably comparisons have been made between the star of the show, Reg Livermore, and its eponymous hero, Phineas T. Barnum. The real comparison, however, is not with the actor, but with the entrepreneur behind the show, Michael Edgley. The scope of Edgley's promotions to date may fall short of those of Barnum, remaining as he has within the Australian entertainment scene (though his break into films with *Man From Snowy River* may put them on a par internationally), but his leadership in the field, his command in many ways his methods, make Michael Edgley a true inheritor of Phineas T. Barnum's extraordinary showmanship.

Edgley was born into showbusiness, his father and uncle having been Edgley and Dave, comedy duo and entrepreneurial company, while Barnum was the son of a Gaiety Tavern keeper, but both acquired a basic business grounding in their early years. Barnum senior saw that his son was not cut out for a simple life on the land and bought him a store to manage. Eric Edgley wanted his son to have a "normal" upbringing and career outside of the business and sent him off to learn accountancy. A combination of the commercial acumen and know-how and an extraordinary flair for presenting the spectacular has made both men the



"I don't regret one bit of personal or business life"

"No one else comes within close of us now"

"I always take the philosophy that to get it you've got to spend it"

"We do better than anyone else. We're very good at selling shows"

outstanding entrepreneurs of their times, and alongside these qualities runs an unerring instinct in both for the value of publicity, professional and personal, that has put both them and their products head and shoulders above their competitors.

Michael Edgley, though, is not the egocentric, self-promoter that Barnum allegedly was, nor such a ruthless producer. A Major Bond once said "I never knew a more heartless man, or one who knew the value and possibilities of a dollar more than P T Barnum" and claimed that when one of his Armcores was run over and killed by a cement truck he called it "rather a benefit than a loss" as another was waiting for her place!

Edgley describes himself as having "always been interested in making a dollar", and anyone who has had dealings with him will know him to be an uncompromising businessman, but his concern for his shows and especially his organisation is comparable to that for his family. In many ways it is precisely that. He is the head of the company that bears his name, but in which his mother, sister, wife and previously brother, all play large roles. Even the staff who are not family are treated more or less as such — "Part of our success has always been that it is a family affair, they all work on a percentage of profits, everyone feels personally responsible — they get a physical high from a full theatre or equally an empty theatre is the pits

Fortunately, our success rate is eight out of ten."

Edgley feels that his staff place more emphasis on "the Michael Edgley side" than he does himself. When his father died in 1967, he, with his mother and brother Philip, ran the firm which was still called Edgley and Davey, but "as my public identity grew, the firm decided to use me as a figurehead and so the name was changed to Michael Edgley Incorporated. I'm now thinking of cutting out the Michael, my desire is to tone my public influence down."

But at the moment he still appears in the television commercials for his shows, personally recommending them to the public, and the comeliness of the showbusiness family, the attractive young husband and wife team and the luxurious lifestyle are tastefully played up, not to mention the car ads of a few years ago and his American Express endorsement.

While this is all publicity itself, compared to the capital P.T. Barnum made out of even his misfortunes, such as a stint in prison or an injured leg, selling is what Edgley believes "we do better than anyone else. We're very good at selling shows." He believes the organisation employs the country's two best publicists, his wife Jenn, and Susan Howe. The only major difference in judgement he had with Kenneth Brookbank in various Edgley-Williamson joint enterprises was in the area of publicity.

"Once my father was gone, he (Brookbank) was the only person I held in great respect — we had a wonderful relationship over the years and he was very helpful to me. He could be difficult, he was very tight with money. Sometimes I wanted to spend a lot of money on promoting something and Ken would say 'Don't waste it.' I always take the philosophy that to get it you've got to spend it, and we've proved that with, for instance, the Moscow Circus on ice. We spent \$200,000 on promotion and put through 1,200,000 people in 12 weeks — it was unheard of. It grossed \$7 or \$8 million. We work out our costs very carefully and spend up to 30% of the gross on promotion."

Like Barnum, Edgley doesn't believe in publicity without product — "If they don't like it they won't come back, or even come at all, because of word of mouth. You might be able to promote to fill the first week, but then it's on the



Michael and Jenn Edgley with kids Douglas (young) and Emily (older) from Snowy Mount

product." Barnum made it his business to search out the most spectacular acts around the world and Edgley's tend to pick up on successes in America and England and mount them in Australia. Both tend to have made their break and relied heavily on a single particular spectacular. For Barnum it was the extraordinary performance of the mannikin General Tom Thumb, in Edgley's case it has been the Russian connection.

Surprisingly, it did not take many years of diplomatic manoeuvres for

Edgley to corner the market in presenting Russian extravaganzas — ballets, circuses, dancers and singers. In fact the Russians approached Eric Edgley via the Embassy in Canberra to ask if he would be interested in bringing over some of their performers to Australia. He was invited to go to Moscow to see if he thought it would be appropriate and the results of this visit are now history. (The only reason Edgley's have not had any Russian shows of late is an embargo on them entering Australia since the Afghanistan crisis.)

In fact it was in Michael's era that the fruits of this offer came to bear. When his father died in 1967, the company was only just beginning to break even after 50 years. Michael inherited half the way of money, but an enormous amount of goodwill, experience and contacts. "He'd just broken the ice with the Russians and one of my first goals was to diversify and protect a lot more, and this is still my policy." The first really big success didn't come until 1978 with the Moscow Circus. It began its tour in Perth and the day it opened there the company was down to its last \$3,000. With Barnum-like belief and personal involvement, Edgley persuaded his mother to mortgage the family house to raise their share of the venture. It was a huge success and have given him both the capital and confidence to go on and do more.

"The psychological side of it is so



important, like ice-cream players, the psychological determination to do something. Often I feel depressed and think we're not doing it the right way. People around me say, yes we are, we're the best, jump out of it and get on and do it."

Phonetic T. Barnum spent a long time trying to out-spectacular his competitors such as James A. Barley and the Ringling Brothers, eventually he decided to stop trying to beat them and joined them, creating the even more successful amalgam which produced *The Greatest Show On Earth* (educed in Edgley's *Greatest Circus on Earth*, 1977) for many years. Edgley's has always believed in harmonious relations with other companies and have always sought to involve others in their productions. First Edgley always maintained that a way wrong to be too greedy and Michael agrees that it's better to have 30% of a success than 100% of a failure. Such a philosophy has allowed the company a greater flexibility and has also helped many others — J. C. Williamson, for instance, could have gone out of business a good five years before it did without the success of the Edgley attractions. Had he gone it alone though, Jen says, they would now be bankrupt.

Their major partners now are often the government funded entrepreneurs,

the Elizabethan Theatre Trust and the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust with both of whom they have very good relations. As Edgley says, it goes back to flexibility, and if the government at some time in the future comes to permit these bodies to be involved in entrepreneurial activities then he will simply look elsewhere. But, "No one else comes within cooee of us now that Ken Broadbent is in retirement and Harry M. Miller has lost interest in the theatrical side of things" he claims, and feels that the best minds in the country are now contained within the Edgley organisation.

All members of the organisation travel, consider shows and put in their opinion, but, the way Michael Edgley tells it at least, the productions they mount virtually choose themselves. There are two sides to the Australian situation on the positive you can afford to sit back and see which shows take off in the West End and on Broadway before taking a punt on mounting them here, and by the time they do get on, the public will know a lot about them and their success, on the negative, the costs of mounting and touring a production here are immense because of labour costs and distances and the small catchment areas are very limiting of the length of seasons.

"Ewww," says Edgley, "transo long, although it was profitable to the end."

Jennifer Murphy had problems with her voice, Pam LeFoot was limited to three months work by the unions, and as the best Evita in the world could hardly be successfully replaced by the third Australian Evita.

Barnum was chosen by Edgley's consultant Robert Helpmann, who phoned Edgley on holiday in Hawaii after opening night to say that he must do it and the only person to do it with was Reg Livermore. Livermore, then being swamped by London weekend, saw the show in New York and, with a few meetings, agreed to do a Edgley says he will leave Jim Dale and Michael Crawford for dead, "He'll knock their eyes out. And this will give Australia the chance to see the wholesome Reg Livermore."

Barnum the musical may give Livermore a chance to play a more lovable role to his public, but Barnum the man was, by all accounts, hardly an easy person to be around. Michael Edgley describes himself as still "pretty intense, but mellowing with security. I'm a difficult sort of person to live with. Barnum has always been a part of family life, though over the last four years with four great kids growing up we have managed to have more family life. But we enjoy what we're doing — new shows, the film (*After Four Sleepy Rivers*), a series of children's programmes for TV, a theme park in Perth. We couldn't do the intense work, long hours if we didn't enjoy it.

"I don't think I'll ever retire, but by the time I'm 50 I'd like to tone it down a little, leave some time to enjoy life. We do up to 20 shows a year; I'd like to be involved in one or two and a film perhaps. I don't regret one bit of personal or business life, but at 50 (some 10 years away) I'd like to have a little pressure taken off."

Already Michael Edgley's impact has been recognised with an MBE — when he received it in 1973 he was the youngest Australian ever to be awarded one for theatre — and in 1976 Western Australia honoured him with the prestigious "Charm of the Year" award.

The way things are going we might not have to wait a hundred years for Edgley — the Musical, but choosing a lead might prove harder than for Barnum. Jen is already working on the book.





U.K.

Women (and Robyn Archer) in London

by Irving Wamba

Women's theatre has been going strong in Britain for over a decade, but it is only within the past year that its ranks have been strengthened by a legion of second-generation feminists who differ in several ways from their chained elders. For one thing they acknowledge that the sex war is only part of a larger game in which men as well as women are the losers, that if there were less frustration in factories and love quarrels there would be fewer tears over the kitchen sink. Also the movement has acquired a much-needed sense of fun. The

arguments are much the same, but exhortation has given way to satire. Men may be unspeakable bosses, but why do we have to be boring as well?

On the examples generously on offer, take a piece like Sarah Daniels' *Apes On Parkers* (Royal Court, studios) which tells the tale of a church-madness, and so submerged in rule propaganda that she supposes it to be her own fault when the waris going mad. In Miss Daniels' hands, this sad story becomes a suburban Punch and Judy show with ruthless dolls hammering each other to a pulp in the setting of a fungus-infested kitchen. An atmosphere of heavy good cheer pervades the carnage. "Your father's just choked to death on a stone," announces one long-winded, over-the-top, hysterical character who immediately appears in Turn-of-the-century dress. The whole thing is mixed with gleefully brutal gags which reach their climax in the heroine's insane note "Dear David, Your dinner and my head are in the oven."

For those who prefer resistance to martyrdom, there is Celia Luckham's *Popford Town* (Lyric, Hammersmith) in which a girl who has been rebelliously

bullied by parents, teachers, and employers finally rebels within marriage and turns her husband into the domestic slave. What transforms this from wish-fulfillment into actuality is the fact that it is staged in a boxing ring, with everyone from the cradle to the marriage bed pummeled as interestingly punishing blows in a tide fight.

Change the metaphor and you get *4 Pack of Women* (Drd Hall), whose title refers not to the company of three but to the eight of Robyn Archer and her partners laying out a deck of cards in the refrain, "How do you stack at a game when the rules keep changing?", the idea being that either through potence, old mind, poker, or some game yet to be devised, women deserve a new deal. This feminist cartoon runs through the evidence from the Beatles and Dorothy Wordsworth ("William was working all the morning, labelled post") to Betty Miller and Dolly Parton, with passing contributions from the Continental feminist movement.

Miss Archer, who needs no introduction to JA readers, nailed up her colours mightily quick, though it was not until half-time, with a roaring "Menstruation Blues", that



Archer Films: Sharon Korshen and David Fielder in Traverse Theatre company's *Popford Town*

she had the house at her mercy. After that, neither she nor anyone else in the show could do any wrong, and the evening broke up in a mood of inter-annual solidarity, best summed up in Lynn McCarthy's "Dear Gertrude, You've got a lot to answer for."

These shows, and others like them, are proliferating on provincial stages and in the indie and pub theatres of the London fringe. Women playwrights, if not necessarily feminists, are also coming through with that rarest of all theatrical commodities: the commercially viable and artistically honest West End play.

I reported last time on Neil Dünan's *Steaming*. This has been followed by an equally popular piece called *Harvest* (Ambsassadors) by the previously unknown Eileen Dwyer who tells the provincial English fable of the prodigal's homecoming — the prodigal in this case being a bright daughter who escaped into a smart metropolitan marriage, now dutifully returning for a family funeral which reopens the wounds of childhood, and contains the reward of those who stayed put with those of those who got away. It goes without saying that Marian will be the intellectual superior of her blundered college class who dresses her education as "showing off", and that the play will swing round to show there is as much right on their side as there is on hers.

The story is being acted out every day of the week in homes throughout the land, and what counts is not the scenario but the individual life the writer puts into it as witness the first scene with the family awkwardly learning to a hymn with their backs to the audience. Marian (Lynn Furlough) takes advantage of this lull to whip round and fill us in on her own sorry memories of the deceased. The speech is funny, it supplies information, and it establishes not only her own wittily skewed character, but that of the minister who pretends to give the family a hymn rather than read them with uncertain phantasies about a man he never knew.

Here, and in the ensuing funeral party we are in the midst of a Methodist community which will strike an immediate answering chord in anyone brought up in the atmosphere of hard chairs, wrong-note organ playing and Harvest Festival gardens of plastic anemones. Play and production skills are as spare as a piece of Shaker furniture.

This is a modest and unflashy comic piece which happens to give a narrative picture of how life goes on for countless inconspicuous people, and offers a remarkably well-written debate between the eternal arrangements of personal loyalty and self-fulfilment. It is typical of Miss Dwyer and that when she finally appears to come down on the side of loyalty she needs things up with the light of a rebel teenager of the next generation planning to scale the wall to the wilderness outside.



Sylvester La Tourel and Lynn Furlough in Harvest.



Sisters

by Karl Levitt

Suddenly sisters — and the theme of sisterhood — are abloom on New York stages. It's logical enough when you think about it, I suppose. After the usual theatrical wave of feminist fervour, the examination of sisterhood is a natural second stop. That two of these plays are written by young women demonstrates how the women's movement may be opening up new reservoirs of talent,

providing new perspectives while giving the theatre a shot in the arm.

Children shorn of the taboos and complexities that can be created with three sisters and Beth Henley has done the same with *Crimes of the Mothers* (a sort of *The Three Sisters Go Cross*). David South: What is remarkable is that this is Ms Henley's first play. It won the 1979 Great American Play Contest sponsored by the Actors Theatre of Louisville, then picked up last year's Pulitzer Prize in Drama when produced off-Broadway at the Manhattan Theatre Club. Now this production has been brought intact to Broadway and Ms Henley can walk centre stage and take a big Broadway bow.

Although there are a couple of Chickadee moments in *Crimes of the Mothers* this is not what these three sisters are about. What Ms Henley has given us is a southern Gothic comedy whose principal device is calumny. The coming together of

the three sisters is caused when Babe the youngest sister shows her husband, Meg, a faded sugar-lily in from California to the family home in Hardham, Mississippi. Left by the maiden stay-at-home sister, Lorraine, Babe is released on to a life and the fun (and calamities) begin. Calamities, past and present, come in barrels and the tone of mock-gravity is as well maintained that by the third act when Crandall has a stroke, you join with the sister's in a fit of giggles.

Now that it tooks stuff but Mr Henley gives it a surety and consistency of tone that is sustained throughout three well-structured acts. As before the tale, this is a constant comedy and Mr Henley cleverly plays on all of the heart for each eccentric sister. The originality and quantity of the comedy promise a productive future for Ruth Henley.

The play has been given a wonderfully cohesive production by director Melvin Bernhardt and as the three sisters, Lisa Beth Mackay, Mary Beth Hunt and Mia Dillon

are just that — sisters — each being poignant and funny in turn. As the young lawyer defending Babe, Peter MacNicol makes an auspicious Broadway debut.

Off-Broadway at the Second Stage, Wendy Kesselman presents a darker view of sisterhood in *My Sister in this House*. This play was also first presented at the Actors Theatre at Louisville (Joe Barry there deserves some sort of medal) and we in New York are grateful to the Second Stage which has the commendable policy of producing plays of the last ten years that deserve another chance.

My Sister in this House is based on a true incident that took place in the French town of Le Mans in the early 1930s. Two convent nuns go to work for Madame Desnard and her teenage daughter. The play is extraordinary and we watch as Ms Kesselman presents episodic scenes showing the servant/mistress and sister/sister relationships over a period of several years. The four women are trapped in a social prison; cooker and Ms Kesselman slowly

brings the play to the head with its inevitable explosion ending. It represents on every level is the theme of the play and Ms Kesselman provides biting insights on this theme as she incorporates brutal domestic detail to build to her horrific climax.

A notable failing — with the playwright partly to blame, but principally the directors, Ingeborg Lodgner and Candice Rothman, should take the rap — is the production's lack of period scene and place. This is the French province was Yankeeized and the early scenes are off-putting on this account. It is only when we are drawn into the characters' relationships that Ms Kesselman can begin to work her end spell. Severely May is the mistress anyone would want to murder, yet if anyone would want to murder, yet the performance contains expert comic touches. Lisa Dillon, as the elder sister, is the play's driving force and captures exactly the repressed hysteria that is central to the play. Lisa Beth McGovern (who at twenty already has a following through her films *Ordinary People* and *Rapture*) makes the younger sister a study in intensity and flowering sexuality. Ms McGovern's beauty and rag-doll charm look like they are combined with a lively intelligence. She is a most welcome rising star.

Katherine Hepburn is a star that has long had a good place in the theatrical firmament. She is back on Broadway with Dorothy Loudon in Ernest Thompson's *The West Side Waltz*. For a comparatively young playwright, Mr Thompson has a surprising interest in the topic of aging, his last play *On Golden Pond* being on the same subject (Hepburn is currently appearing in the film with Henry Fonda).

In *The West Side Waltz* Ms Hepburn is a retired music teacher living on New York's West Side. Dorothy Loudon is a virginal widow who lives in the same building. One of the principal themes Mr Thompson deals with, is the presence of Ms Loudon in posing a truly sisterly relationship with Ms Hepburn — the violent and painful harmony. And we get this just before final curtain, wouldn't you know.

The West Side Waltz is what used to be called a "vehicle" — and a tired and creaky vehicle it is at that. There are no scenes where the major interest is just what mutual devotee Age has reduced Katherine Hepburn as we go downhill to the finale. Mr Thompson's writing is contrived and inconsistent. Ms Hepburn is again the embodiment of every Yankee virtue — spirited, independent, and sharp-tongued. She almost succeeds in making the shop-worn material with brightness and a sense of wit through sheer willpower. And when all else is lost you can look in those fabulous blue-eyes. Now if only Ruth Henley could be persuaded to write a character (not a vehicle) for Katherine



Katherine Hepburn and Dorothy Loudon in *The West Side Waltz*



Elizabeth McGovern and Edo Gero in *My Sister Is This House*



Mary Beth Maer, Elizabeth Workan and Mia Dillon in *Crown of the Heart* Photo: Merida Seape

Highborn. That's the kind of underwear the theatre needs.

Probably the most popular sister in New York recently has been the title character in Christopher Durang's *Sister Mary Explains It All For You*. The play is the second of a double bill of one-acters and it shows Mr Durang at his most ferocious in his continuing religious war. The play begins (just as the title says) as a lecture to the audience on Catholic dogma. A visit by some of Sister's ex-pupils to perform a Nativity pageant brings a come-appearance (of sorts) to Sister Mary.

The play, although absurd, is filled with that kind of nervous laughter brought on by scenes that are instantly recognised from one's own life. It is a time-bomb funny and utterly meant to give offence where possible. Mr Durang always has structural problems with his plays and here it is the leap ending. As Sister Mary, Elizabeth Franz is comic while being convincing enough to frighten even adults who have paid for their seats. The curtain raiser, *The Actor's Nightmare*, shows an accountant lost in an audition of *Hamlet*, *Pinus Erici*, *End Game* and *A Man For All Seasons*. The play allows Mr Durang to show some clams at playwrights and the time the strands of comic invention make a pleasing whole. Christopher Durang is a young American playwright with a truly original and acute vision and this double bill shows him in top form.

The *Three Sisters* may have never made it to Moscow, but many more than this have already arrived in New York. On and off Broadway, the wariness of the theatre is flourishing. Look for it at your local theatre.

ITI

AUSTRALIAN CENTRE INTERNATIONAL THEATRE INSTITUTE

453 Darling Street,
Potts Point, NSW 2041.
Tel 257 1200

Director, Martin Thomas
Secretary, Alison Lyons

MONSTROUS REGIMENT

Brilliant British feminist theatre company touring Europe in the summer of '82 with a piece of epic theatre by Melissa Murray, about terrorism, women and revolution, politics and culture in the wife/friend of pre-revolutionary Russia. Information from *Monstrous Regiment*, Cate Glascock, 4 Elder Street, London E1 4BT. Tel (01) 247 2796.

TIEDIE — THIRD WORLD THEATRE

An international company touring Europe early 1982 with a new production, *Chetiv's*, an adaptation of *The Midnight Reveller*, by Egyptian playwright, SA Sabouni. It traces the fate of women in our society and includes music, song, dance, music, masks and puppets. It can be performed in theatres and in the street. More info: Tiedie, Heiststraat 6, B-2000 Deurne, Belgium.

WOMEN LIVE

Are you bored and frustrated by plays that keep women the eternal victims? Visit *Women Live*, UK, May '82, a month's entertainment with most theatre companies programming women's performing arts! Special programmes too at BBC and at independent cinemas. Try theatres like Oval House and Action Space. Many offers too like Half Moon and Cockpit and large numbers of regional theatres have offered space for women's theatre. There'll be film showings and exhibitions in Regional Art centres, including Darlington. Write to: Women Live, Womenand Entertainment Office, 11 Acklam Road, London W10. Tel (01) 969 2292. Throughout May, 1982. London and regions, UK.

THEATRE OF NATIONS FESTIVAL

A festival of outstanding performances from many countries, including dance, music theatre, drama, and popular theatre forms of oral tradition. Also seminars and lectures on the roots and origins of theatre. Organized by the Bulgarian ITI centre. Info: Prof P. Philipov, President, Bulgarian Centre of the ITI, PO Box 833, Sofia — C, Bulgaria. 20 June to 4 July 1982, Sofia, Bulgaria.



We've been playing to audiences for over five years, and are one of the longest running shows around!

We set the scene with the most in-depth news coverage of the gay community. Our interviews, special features and international reporting keep you involved as well as aware of events in Australia and throughout the world. We complete the performance with comprehensive reviews of music, theatre and art.

Catch a rising star. See the hottest show in town! Subscribe to **CAMPAIGN** - Australia's best!

Name

Address

Town State Post Code

Send cheque/credit money order payable to **CAMPAIGN** and mail to:
P.O. Box 341, Brockfield Hill NSW 2050 12 issues \$10.00 24 issues \$20.00 **74**

ONE EXTRA DANCE THEATRE

THE CHEATED

Based on the book
by Louis Nones.

Directed by
Ron Tai Chen

Original Music
Composed by
Richard Veale

Designed by
Selva Jenkins

Cleveland St. Performance Space
188 Cleveland St., Redfern

10-22 February, Wed-Sun 8pm

TICKETS: \$6.00, \$4.00 CDS

Bookings Eng
Michael Bass 519 5559

theatre **ACT** (FORTUNE) **1982**

Director **GEORGE WHALEY**
Administrator **RODNEY WILSON**
Dramaturg **MICHAEL BODDY**
Designer **JANET DAWSON**

In 1981 we presented *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* and *Old Times*. Our applications for 1982 funding from the Department of the Capital Territory and the Theatre and Literature Boards of the Australia Council were successful, and six productions are planned for this year.

SEASON 1, February to April:

- **ON OUR SELECTION**, for the Canberra Festival, at the Playhouse.
- **EINSTEIN**, by Ron Elisha, at the A.N.U. Arts Centre.
- Our first **THEATRE AT LARGE** community production in the **AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL** during Anzac Week.

SEASON 2, August to November:

- An original **CHILDREN'S PLAY**, at the Canberra Theatre.
- A **CLASSIC**, yet to be selected, at the Playhouse.
- **HAMLET ON ICE**, by Michael Boddy and Ron Blair, at the Playhouse.

THEATRE ACT (Fortune Theatre Co. Inc.) A.N.U. Arts Centre, P.O. Box 4, CANBERRA A.C.T. 2600 (062) 49 4737

Theatre Reviews



A.C.T.

Truth and vitality

HAIR

by Ken Healey

New Troupe Theatre at Emerald Centre, Warrumbidgee
Opened December 15, 1981
Creative: Ron Verbrugg, musical director: Keith Redford, choreographer: Janet Curry
(Admission)

Standing ovations and overflow crowds told Troupe Theatre that it was doing something right in serving the non-geared, poor. Hair in the far-distant Canberra satellite town of Warrumbidgee. The production was truly remarkable for Ron Verbrugg's tight, professional production, and for the tribal unity of the relatively untrained kids who made up the cast.

All of the young people in Hair sang better than they moved. Acting did not seem too central a concern, as the kids seemed to have inherited the freedom so shockingly exposed by Hair in the 60's, and to wear their attitudes as easily as beads, socially sane, or cunning.

The always-thin story of Claude's call-up made virtually no impression during the longer first act, and provided little in the second. Stephen Pike as Claude has a natural presence which served as a focus for Carol Statley's Sherie, singing up a storm; for Anne Park as a knowing, hole-girl griggon (Jeanette); and for the near-coast singer and Paul of Giteau Bayles and Tony Pals.

Keith Redford drove his rock band with a Hair unusual for Canberra's musical stage. One knew that no one in this cast had been old enough to be experiencing Hair as boys so there was an integrity from the performance allied to a dimensional shaping which captured the truth and vitality of the show.

Secrecy was minimal. The nude scene, rapidly back-to by Alanna MacLean, served Hair much as the elephant served Aids on the other side of Canberra: it brought the curious, who stayed to witness over aspects of the show that they had never known existed.

The moral of the success story is that Canberra's artists liberally subsidised amateur societies must invest whatever dollars they can haphazardly gather in the best available professional directors



Troupe Theatre's Hair

Musical directors of similar calibre should also be engaged where possible. Choreography with untrained dancers and sets made by non-professionals are not nearly as important, and can be integrated into the overall production concept by a

director of the calibre of Ron Verbrugg. Hair probably succeeded better than a far more expensive professional revival could have done, thereby demonstrating that there is a place for high quality amateur theatre in our cities.

N.S.W.

Gladdening the heart

YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU

CHICAGO

SESAME STREET LIVE

THE COCKY OF BUNGAREE

TALES FROM THE VIENNA WOODS

DESERT FLAMBE

CHEAP THRILLS

by Michael Le Morgan

You Can't Take It With You by John Galsworthy. Music, Lyrics and George's Bookends. Drama Theatre. Sydney. Opens March. Closed January 2 1982.

Director: George Ogilby, Designer: Andrew Fordham, Costume Designer: Anna French, Lighting Designer: Roger Barrett, Stage Manager: Malcolm Ross.

Cast: 40 Theatre. Gordon McDougall, Carol Ray, Heather Mitchell, Ann Hunter, The McKinnon Trio: Anne, Barbara, Stephen, Geoffrey Rush, Alexander Ma, John Forsdyke, 4 vocal Musicals, Peter Copley, Robert Hughes, Les Baines, Margo Lee, Stage Manager: Michael O'Neill and Paul Williams.

(Performance)

Chicago by Fred Ebb and Bob Fosse, with music by John Kander. Based on the play *Chicago* by Maxwell Glazer. Walters Theatre Royal Sydney. Reopened December 31 1981.

Director: Richard Wilson, Designer: Brian Thompson, Musical Director: Peter Lane, Choreographer: Ross Sullivan, Costumes: Roger Roth, Lighting: Sue Anthony, Sound: Luke Ford, Stage and Company Manager: John Whelan.

Cast: Theatre Music: Geraldine James, Frances Buchanan, Bill Kenwright, J.P. Williams, George Spartz, Rod Doolan, John Lowe, Judith Linn, Robin Henry, Barbara Stone, Paula Marshall, Pamela Franklin, Mark Lazarus, Garry Graham, 10 J. Pinner, Garry Bedford, Gary Shand, Bill Pinner, Cheryl Rogers.

(Performance)

Seven Seven Six Capital Theatre. Sydney. Opens December 26 1981. Michael Lippley. *See on road.*

The Cocky of Bungaree by Richard Lethbridge. Musical Theatre Company on Clark Road. Sydney Harbour. Opens January 5 1982.

Director: Chris Johnson, Designer: Richard Roberts, Music Co-ordinator: Richard Lethbridge, Production Management: Wayne Wright and John Woodhead, Stage Manager: Jane Marie Morgan.

Cast: Channing Whitaker, Greg Demmech, Susan



Paul Bryson and Carol Munn in *Richard Lethbridge's The Cocky of Bungaree*

Colonel, Tony Taylor, Maria Vaughan, Paul Brennan, Emma Marmion, Rose Maffioletti
(Performers)

Bats Over The Fence *Music by Colin von Horn*
 Directed by Peter Sydney. Opened November 25, 1981
 Director: Andrew Miller. Designer: Vicki Pennington.
 Lighting Designer: Jonathan Coker. Musical Director:
 Ian, Michael, Coker and Bruce Conway. Choreography: Keith Ross. Stage Manager: John Higgins.
 Cost: Ian Rams, Robert Williamson, Michele Fennell,
 Robert Alexander, Anna Spinks, Ian Young, Robert
 Hunter, Gabrielle Price, Russell Fells, Cuffy Bennett,
 Barry Otto, Brandon Burke
(Performers)

Don't Fumble Aroundly in Great Wombats *Directed by*
 Dorothea Sydney. Opened December 16, 1981
 Director/Choreographer: Christine Kottler, Company:
 Musical Director: Sarah de Jong. Designer: Michele
 Conway. Lighting Designer: John Woodhead. Stage
 Manager: Anna Heath.
 Cost: Valerie Butler, Brenda Williamson, Susan
 Dallas, Jenny Wigg, Lillian Hyde, Deborah Kennedy,
 Jenny Ludlow, Peter Max Ludlow. Production:
 Mike Greening
(Performers)

Clump Waddle by Great Funnies *Written by*
 Company of the Gables Sydney. Opened January 3,
 1982

Director: Ian Watson. Designer: Jack Butler. Lighting
 and Production Manager: David Fennell. Stage
 Manager: Brian Roberts.
 Cost: Penny Cook, Ben Fennell, Hugh Knight, Rosemarie
 Simon, Andrew James
(Performers)

The many types of theatre have many functions: they should delight the eye and ear, gladden the heart, inspire the imagination and enlarge the sensibilities. But above all, theatre is an art form of the mind. The essence of a good play is that it contains ideas and arguments expressed in an interesting manner. The rest is window-dressing.

For this reason, the most important person in any theatrical production is the playwright, followed by the actors who directly interpret the text, followed by the director, whose function is to assist the actors' work and to attend to the various technical matters such as staging, followed by the set and costume designers and technicians who provide the necessary packaging.

I have not included music on this list because it is clearly of variable importance. If a play is more of a musical, it can get away with being less of a play. Most musicals do.

There are also exceptions to this general rule, where from time to time a playwright, the director or designer who makes the major contribution to a production, but significantly, it takes a truly exceptional production to salvage a poor play.

Quite a lot of nonsense is written about the creative achievements and labours of directors, much of it by critics, who should know better. Actors too, tend to pay lip-service to the notion of directors, because actors are usually generous, vulnerable, intelligent people who have chosen for themselves an inquisitively low socio-economic position, for the sake of an ideal



of which they often have only the faintest conception. Also, because actors are employed by directors, it should be the other way around.

In the theatre, the director is not so much an actor as a senior stage manager. In Sydney, a number of actors' co-operations are springing up. The 'unimposed directorial style' of Rex Compton's Shakespeare Company deserves serious consideration, although the most recent example of domestic theatre, *Brave Fumble* from the Women and Theatre Project at Nimrod, was a rather one-paced shambles.

These revolutionary innovations are prompted by two productions which grossly do seem to bear the stamp and style of their respective directors, the Sydney Theatre Company's *Two Cars, Two Foe Foe* (George Ogilvie) and Chicago (Richard Wherrett).

Ogilvie's previous production for the STC was Bob Herbert's delightful period

piece about wartime Sydney, *No Name! No Park Deal! You Can't Take It With You*, by Hart and Kaufman, was a little earlier, in 1976, at a highly idiosyncratic private home in New South Wales.

Martin Vonderhof (Al Thomas) and his family, mindful of the wisdom of the tale, have abandoned their pursuit of the straight dollar. They have dropped out. They live at a substantial level in order to pursue their dreams. Grandfather keeps snakes in the living-room, Mother (Carol Raye) writes plays which are never performed, Father (Gordon McInnes) makes fireworks which frequently explode in the basement, and the real first-come, enter first (Jane Harder) dances through the house, clownishly convinced she is the next Ginger Rogers.

When sister Alice (Heather Mitchell), the only normal member of this family of first-thinking eccentric, becomes engaged to the son of an overfed and under-employed capitalist family, the scene is set

N.S.W.

(continued)

for a superb comic confrontation. Grandfather's answer that he hadn't paid income tax for 12 years because he didn't believe in it brought a roar of approval from the Opera House audience.

The play is noticeably light and frolicsome in the point of absurdity, all broad faces and broadway gags. But it also has something to say, something about the quality of life as it could be if we adopted different values: if we paid what we do above what we are paid for doing it.

The true skill of a theatre director lies in focusing the audience's attention, not on what he wants them to see or hear, but through that on what he wants them to think, almost and realise intellectually and emotionally. George Ogilvie's production was beautifully orchestrated, so as to exploit to the full the theatrical devices of the play, notably its humour. The audience's sympathies were engaged for each character in turn, so that basically unbelievable scenes became momentarily believable, underlining the play's parti-

cular relevance. The result was refreshingly provocative.

The keynote of Richard Wherrett's directorial style is disciplined flamboyance. Whether it is Beck hurling his crash across the stage in *Car Guilt* or *The Roof*, or Cyano finally speaking his love from beneath Ravanne's balcony, the great dramatic moments are larger than life yet perfectly under control. In *Chicago*, now enjoying a third sell-out Sydney season at the Theatre Royal, even the pursuit is polished and precise.

It is Nancy Hayen and Geraldine Turner's show: they carry it through with an extraordinary, compelling energy. Veronica Derosovan and George Sparsh (Mr Colloplano) both steal their share of the supporting company in superbly well-defined, well-not an ounce feather out of place.

My one criticism about *Chicago* was that the very precision which held it together seemed to have undermined its spontaneity. Each audience has the right to feel that the unexpected could happen, that the performance is truly live and special for them. This is a somewhat charlton point, after a hundred or so performances, it must be hard to do anything new. But there were a few moments when this first-rate production seemed in some danger of becoming bland. *Chicago* is not just

another mindless musical, but an interesting and vibrant critique of a newspaper-dominated society, and the spectacle should not be allowed to overshadow the ideas.

Summer Street Love, which is presented on a national tour by Michael Edgley, is not live, but taped, and not up to Edgley's usual high standard.

The voices of the familiar characters from the TV series, Ray Red, Cookie Monster, Oscar the Grouch, the Counting Count, etc., were all perfectly authentic, emanating as they did from the original and apparently unmodified American tape. The Australian cast moved and danced their way through it with commendable determination, but the production still seemed very pre-packaged: if the audience laughed longer than allowed at a joke, the next line was simply drowned.

It was uncannily like watching a run TV screen. The children in the audience certainly seemed to enjoy themselves, but overall the production was disappointingly undermanned.

More traditional pantomime faces came from the Nimrod Theatre, in the shape of their spirit of children's play performed on Clark Island in Sydney Harbour, Richard Talbot's *The Cooks of Bangaroo*, directed by Chris Johnson.

From the departure of the ferry boat



Carol Anne, Robert Hughes, M. J. James, Jane Riddell and Tim W. Anderson in *Chicago* at the Theatre Royal, Sydney.

from the Opera House stage, with actors and audience sharing it was a gilly romp, a journey to a place of myth, fable and almost totally suspended disbelief.

Paul Benham, still remembered from Narrard's last Clark Island offering *Peewee at the Race* (1961) here opened his success. He has the happy and unusual knack of making both children and adults laugh at the same time, at different jokes he is a master of the aside. As the villainous crop-duster, Sir Sydney Harbours, his every snap is vigorously and deservedly booed and booted by the young audience. Sir Sydney is poised to chase the brave Cocky Bourke (Martin Vaughan) out of the property he has arrived and stayed over these forty years.

Help arrives in the shape of the principal boy, Flash Jacqueline from Gindigga, the fastest dancing sheila that side of the rabbit-proof fence, the only one capable of shearing Cocky's sheep in time to thwart Sir Sydney's plot and save the farm. There is some glorious clowning from Tony Taylor as a Scottish superintendent of almost anything, Circle Skinner as Diamond L.L., the sly pragmatist of equalty/capacity/bottom and heart Warren Coleman as a jumbo-buck constable and Tony Sheldon as Gerald the Clever Sheep.

It is a marvellous tale, cleverly conceived, with a second, workable plot and a stack of theatrical tricks to please the kids. The Cocky of Kangaroo is an excellent introduction to live theatre.

Narrard's final production of last year won two highly ambitious magical works which ultimately failed to live up to expectations.

Uptans was the first Australian performance of a play by Odon von Horvath (1893-1938), an Austro-Hungarian playwright of the 1930s whose work is attracting considerable attention in Europe. This was the recently titled *Tales From The Vienna Woods*, directed by Aubrey Mellor.

Horvath's voice is a unique and disturbing one, a Kafka-esque cry of amazed despair as the prison gates slam shut on hope and the real torment begins. This play, in Christopher Hampton's somewhat colourless translation, has a number of brilliant moments of black comedy, a comically observant on human nature under stress, and a capacious sense of the dominion of hypocrisy, praised by people motivated by need or greed.

Despite excellent work from Narrard's regular company and a number of guests, for me the play failed intellectually it made no clear statement on the nature it was purporting to discuss. There was no continuing thread to link the sketches.

Horvath, a homeless refugee from Hitler's Germany was killed in 1938 by a falling staircase on the Champs Elysees in Paris, after a chauffeur had told him to go there for "the greatest adventure of his



From left: Martin Vaughan, Warren Coleman and Tony Sheldon. © Chicago

life". Had he lived, Horvath would have enjoyed the irony. *Tales From The Vienna Woods* is an intriguing, if jumbled study of the darker needs and desires of fortune.

Downstairs at Narrard was an even more disorganised collection of review items and party tricks, presented by the Women and Theatre group apparently as an end-of-term treat to themselves, *Dearest Claude*.

There were some gems. Deborah Kennedy's opening monologue, a sharp send-up of cynical male cockiness, Valerie Bader's soaring vocals and some crumbly comedy, but *Dearest Claude*, like the Uptans play, offered no coherent, containing thread of thought, with the result that the talents of the cast were by no means fully employed.

Incoherence was also the major failing of the Griffin Theatre Company's fine presentation of the year as the Stables, *Chapz Thrids*. The writer, Grant Fraser, was responsible for two of the best new plays of last year. See and the *Angels Teenager*, also put on by the Griffin.

Chapz Thrids is angrier and less amusing, as well as narrower in focus. Set a decade hence, it examines sex, drugs and rock'n'roll as compensation for living in expectation of the neutron bomb and finds all three wanting. The musical analogy is maintained throughout and the use of pop songs from different ages is at times, potently expressive.

See and the *Angels Teenager* was apocalyptic, a satire of sharp vignettes. *Chapz Thrids* is also structurally incoherent

without the substance of the earlier play. These limitations of plot and character matter either obscure what the writer is trying to say or allow it to be dismissed. The production was memorable mainly for some fine singing from Penny Cook, an superb performance from Ben Franklin and a very cool from Rosemary Lennox. The show is presented with the Griffin's customary energy and enthusiasm, but there is more promise than achievement here, it deserves more encouragement than praise.



Q.L.D.

Strains of war

MOTHER COURAGE AND HER CHILDREN

THE LONDON BLITZ SHOW

by Jeremy Ridgman

Mother Courage and Her Children by Bertolt Brecht
TN Woodward Theatre Brisbane Qld (opened
November 11 1992)

Director: Bryan Mason, Set: David Bell, *Music:* Matthew
Coomes, *Music Bridges Musical Director:* John Bush
Cast: Jennifer Blockidge, Judith Anderson, Paul
Harvey, Peter Worrell, Greg Park, David Price, David
de Wolf, Jane Maa, Vanessa Bridge, Kate Stevenson,
Rita Danks, David Price, Stephen Schwartz, John
Bush

(Performances)

The London Blitz Show by Frank Hartley and Jeremy
Ridgman, Woodward Qld (opened December 1991)

Director: Robert Stephens, *Choreographer:* Megan
Henderson

Cast: Peter Dinkley, Kaye Marshall, John Ross, Kate Ford,
David Taylor, Geoff Leeson

(Performances)

It has been a good year for the TN Company. They have managed to strike a balance between innovation and familiarity that has kept audiences coming back for more, helped them to take risks like *Sweeney* in their stride and established them as a reputable and dedicated ensemble. All this despite not having a home to call their own, though perhaps the TN's nomadic existence has become part of their attraction, in producing an image of raffish artistic bohemia.

Mother Courage is an excellent choice for the end of an auspicious year, a testing piece for the company and a full-blooded experience for their audience. It is probably the company's most satisfactory production this year, well put together and with more than a few inspired moments.

It is difficult to find fault with Bryan Mason's view concerning the play's continuing relevance, but the premise that it is all the more pertinent for having been written at a time when war was in the air, I find reductive. In an important sense, the play is not about war, but about capitalism, for which war serves as an afterthought, war, for Brecht, was capitalism with the gloves off, a way of life to which all and sundry adapt, betraying their human instincts and collaborating, ultimately with the class enemy in the pursuit of economic survival.

The decision to suggest, through modified colloquialisms, some added

ridicule is and, more importantly, updated uniforms, a First World War setting, obviously has strong associations for an audience and makes the experience of the action immediate, but on the metaphorical level it is less satisfactory. What seems important about the Thirty Years War for Brecht is precisely that it lasted, on and off, for thirty years, creating for a generation and half a constant way of life for an Australian audience, the Great War was perhaps too much "over there" and lacked that immediate sense of proximity. Moreover, given that Mason's use of the Anzac image seems intended to work more on a commemorative than a denigrative level, an "idol" rather than melting, it seems a pity that the visual impact was not carried through into the decor, which, in the studio space of the Woodward Theatre was in fact negligible. One wished for a sense of landscape upon which the narrative structure of the play unconsciously to depend; reference perhaps to the paintings of Dryden might have filled the vacuum. The

blend of costume and authenticity of such business as the Cook's preparation of meat conveyed, as Brecht demanded, the day-to-day realism of life, but against the polished parquet floors and apologetically tinted-up black walls of the Woodward, looked faintly out of place.

A rather entire pace and direct use of details from Brecht's model book suggested a rather over deferential approach to the actor itself, and I found aggravating the calculated and slightly precious use of a fake dressing room, complete with mirrors and lights, behind a scrim: the vulgar Brechtianism of which was accentuated by the fact that for the most part the actors chose to change their costumes elsewhere, out of sight, and that the lights in this "dressing room" were often dimmed to complement an effect in the main acting area.

John Bush's arrangement of costumes and his own occasional compositions gave fire to the performance as did the central performances, which were all too greatly in a higher league than those of the supporting cast. Laurence Rodge brought a subtle complexity to the Chapman and Judith Anderson's Kattrin, the audience's second pair of eyes as it were, was superb, rising to a strong climax with her martyred death. Errol O'Neil, an actor of intelligence and rough-brown robustness, was perfect as the Cook and his early scenes with Courage among the best Jennifer Blockidge succeeded in conveying the hard-bitten, gritty determination of Courage, but occasionally I felt the performance was dominated by technique. The chunky stature and physicality in Blockidge's reading of the role however sometimes hardened into imposing images of pride and suffering, as if the final rendering of "Look Alse", combined with the painful yet magnificent effort of at last putting that magic cart on her own, was unforgettable.

War is also the order of the day in Lu Bock's Christmas family fable, *The London Blitz Show*, a nostalgic trip into the world of Vera Lynn and other cards which attempts to pass itself off as a sort of musical *People's War*. In which, I hope, meant to be ironic ending, the cherry was given suddenly come over all political and look forward to building a socialist utopia out of both the ruins and the working class solidarity of wartime. Unfortunately Frank Hartley and Jeremy Barlow, whose *Happy Sides* is a far less pretentious and more honest minor musical, lack the control over their subject matter to make their intentions clear. There is a good sketch about an unwelcome proletarian evictee belated on a snooty aristocratic family and an hilarious minor ink spots routine, but otherwise nothing much you wouldn't get from a \$5.99 special from K. M. I. I am sure that is not regarded to be much more than a liveable, plush cookhouse, Kym Ford goes one better and tells her cat style and a great voice.



Large concerns, many cares

THE SAD SONGS OF ANNIE SANDO

by Gus Warby

The Sad Songs of Anne Sando by Darren Clarke. Stone Theatre Company. Playhouse, Adelaide S.A. Opened November 28, 1991.
Director: Margaret Davis, Designer: Stephen Curtis. Cost: Christine Woodland, Musical: McCreery, Joseph Phillips. Book: Kink (Performance)

Statistics say that upward of 100,000 women and children will seek refuge in women's shelters throughout Australia this year. It was the same last year and, no doubt, the year before that. Statistics say that every week children are abducted by an aggrieved or jealous parent (usually the father) and spirited interstate or even overseas. Organisations like DAWMA and FURCE exist for the sole purpose of fighting child custody orders. Nobody wants to live like war.

When Anne and John Sando "real" they would just be part of the statistics. Their abducted child would be one more link in an endless cycle of violence and retribution. She would be another potential victim of terror, mental torture, deprivation and depression were she to live long enough to marry and have kids of her own. Darren Clarke has given a particular face, a scenario and something of a context to what has remained for too long an anonymous problem.

It is ordered the anonymity — the facelessness and loss of identity — which makes so mark in this production. The very need to hide, to shelter, to protect, governs all other action. "What is my name? My name is Anne Sando" sings a spooked Anne, over and over again in a lament which takes her back to a childhood memory of desolation, past the shades of rebellion, deception, indifference and humiliation. "Who am I, and where do I belong?" are questions which all Clarke's characters ask in different ways. Take Nell, for example.

Nell Turnbull fixates on Anne in the shelter to which they have both fled after being beaten once too often by their husbands. Herein a "teen a.d.f.", "that's the way the world is" toughness and cynicism which hides the residual doubt "Do I deserve to be hit?" Anne and John, Nell



Joseph Phillips in *STC: Set's The Sad Songs of Anne Sando*. Photo: David Wilson

and her husband, are all manifestations of the same male-dominated and fixated perception of the way this society operates.

And John Sando — the buster the bastard — is the outside world in a small "grey" man, who wears someone else's name on his overalls. Swinging dangerously between body and baby he waits for the push, the trigger, which will send him to the brink of desperation and homicide. Inevitably it will be Anne, however, cringing, who takes the punishment.

The Sad Songs Of Anne Sando, then, is a play with large concerns and many cares. The attempt to balance the issues with the small but vital details is not always successful, either in the writing or the shaping of the piece in performance. The direction, by Margaret Davis, audaciously responds in the best writing but fails to unify the piece. Mr Davis has in some parts found real psychological depth and subtlety, and her timing of the final scene in the first half is spot on. But there are moments when the production is over-stated and melodramatic — in the knife-point abduction, for example, which marks the crossroads of the second half. There is a symmetry about the play's structure which demands its production equivalent. There are times too when the Pace Theatre refuses to behave like the fully equipped Playhouse and some changes, mutations and establishing moments need some other mood-maximising design and performance conventions than a scuffle and scuffle in half light.

When it works, however, it works very well. The first shelter scene between Anne (Christine Woodland), Nell (Joseph Phillips), and Louie (Rachel Kink) is excellent, as are the latter half exchanges between Nell and Anne as they attempt to live together in a run down Commission flat. It is, in fact, the presence of Nell, and the performance of Joseph Phillips which given the highlights their stature. Mr Phillips has a firecracker energy and a marvellous sense of comic throw-away timing which integrates Nell's rough-hewn character with her great vulnerability. This is a smart interpretation, in the best sense of the word.

The play needs a male character as strongly written as Nell to provide Anne with the kind of dramatic rebound the requires to release her full potential. Stuart McCreery has done quite a lot. I think, to extrapolate a range of emotional states into the first scene between John and Anne but there is still something lacking here which precludes the chances for character development later.

An Anne, Christine Woodland sings a sad song. Worried, delicate, eventually serene, she holds tightly to the dominating cause of a fragmenting world. The sky sinks, the abject glances, and the sheer physical effort of pushing the character past the barriers and complexities of reality make her Anne Sando as memorable in its way as the central character in Don Chiswick's film about documentary *Who Killed Jerry Langley*.

Soft centres and hard edges

MELBOURNE ROUND-UP

by Suzanne Spencer

For the close of 1981 theatre in Melbourne was still at the centre with MTC dominated by festive froth. At the Athenaeum, Ben Travers' farce *42nd Street* in the West started some devilish chuckles with a lacklustre production only relieved by measured performances by Babs McMillan in the upper-class matrons, and Annee Phelan as the scolding village idiot. While *Archie* had a return season upstairs, Frank Thring rented at Russell Street. Thring's evening's intercourse had some regional appeal and historical dimension but was far too long and indulgent. At Her Majesty's *They're Playing Our Song* continued and continued like a stuck record.

The Playbox was given over to two productions by St Martin's Youth Theatre. *When Legs Collide* by Michael Mitchener and Helmut Rakusan played in the larger downtown theatre. It took Australian cultural broods and became drawn indiscriminately from, it ran the right and the left at least the indifferent and the culpable — Tanya Vostok and Sir Bruce Small to name one extreme, and added an abhorrent sprinkling of over-the-top — Eva Peron, Henry Kissinger and Mother Courage and then had its Rattus lead them in an Ayn Rand Pagan Program. Some 25 young and talented performers were directed in a style of formation acting so tight it made The Plumberberg Rally and *Archie* look undernourished. Despite the over-determination of Rakusan's direction, Gina Raker's *It's*, Kirsten Gair's *Daddy* and Mark Trexler's *Manning Clarke Stone*.

In the smaller upstairs theatre Mitchener directed *The Play* — a Temperament Thing by young writer, Andrew Macpherson with a talented all male cast straight out of the men's section in *Focus*. The play suggested Pinter and early Hubbard, and the stark and child staging around the message implicit in the writing, but swapped the subtleties. Both productions were camp and decidedly misogynist but had an unequivocal style.

The Frim's final last production was *Madroom Troupes* (not rock opera *Savage Love* by Neil Gales and Alison

Richards). It staged the rise and demise of a angularly interesting park, performer and, and little, a never really left the ground but it made a lot of noise from.

An Artful Artful made a return season in French and Arson, a comic group under Chris Decker's direction staged two original pieces. *Frank Red* and *Denise* an adaptation of 4 *Jealousy Named Desire*. In its original form at La Mama, *Frank Red* was beguiling in its rough survey, but

Denise suffered from a tedious lurid and a stage cluttered with numerous untyped comic. Had a been pared down to its three main characters and their environments abstracted it could have worked superbly, for the scenes between Blanche (Robyn Sedgwick), Stanley (Paul McKerr) and Stella (Marlene Ward) soared with irony, electric sexuality. There were little pieces in making a silent film — the power of mime is not to enact words, but to render



MTC's Frank Thring. Photo David Parker

them irrelevant. Meanwhile theatre restaurants prospered with original shows playing at The Comedy Cafe, The Bazaar Lounge, The Flying Traps and La Joke at The Last Laugh. The most interesting and innovative theatre occurred at the edges — in the new Contemporary Performance Centre, at La Mama and Zoo Studios, while popular theatre drew large audiences in provincial centres.

MAHAGONNY

Mahagonny by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill. Zoo Theatre. Contemporary Performance Centre. Hawthorn. Opened November 24, 1981.

Director and Designer: Geoff Hooley. Producer: John Ellis. Musical Director: Bruce Mestel. Staged by: Bruce Mestel.

Cast: Ian Walsh-Hewling, Ruth Schoenheimer, Neil Gladsen, Stephen Kesteven, Bruce Mestel. Lyrics: Fanny Hill (Mrs), Patricia Higgins. Book: Tom (Professors).

Over the past 18 months, Geoff Hooley has gained a considerable reputation as a director of stylish, theatrical theatre. His company, Zoo Theatre, brings together performers drawn largely from the cabaret/theatre restaurant circuit including Steve Kinnear and Neil Gladsen from Les Trois Rongbarkos. Hooley's aim was, "to make art, spectacle and entertainment happen together". The venue was now a converted church, and the vehicle old — Brecht/Weill's 1930 opera, *Mahagonny*. Edited and heavily reworked in the 1960s, complex works of contemporary rock, the production pivoted on a series of projections about civilisation, class, money and justice put in the dialectic mode.

In other plays Brecht has shaped his argument better, but the power of *Mahagonny* has always lain with Weill's music and the songs, and Hooley's version had similar strengths and weaknesses. The songs and the singing-acting of Ruth Schoenheimer as Jenny and Bruce Mestel as Jimmy were strong — hard, raucous, ironic and poignant. Schoenheimer's version of "The Alabama Song" and Mestel's superb horn playing and vocals on "When You're A Stranger in the City" made even the ear-splitting loudness bearable. The entrepreneurial figures, Tony Moran and Lorraine Reghah, who build and rule the city of Mahagonny are only sketched by Brecht and Hooley's casting of Neil Gladsen and Ian Walsh-Hewling seemed distanced more by the arresting visual effect of their physical contrast, than their ability to command a performance. Gladsen was raucous and wryly evil while Walsh-Hewling postured and declaimed without controlling attention. Their performance in Brecht's unusually direct quart song made Jimmy's trial and death sentence more plaintive



Bruce Mestel and Neil Gladsen in *Mahagonny*. Photo: Jeff Brady

when the horse and ugly tragedy it could have been.

Hooley's aesthetic is brutal modernism — two-tiered scaffolding towers like the burning ghats dominated the acting area, and beneath them the actor-singers performed on wooden pallets monocentered into position on fork lifts by a second stage manager, electrical wires connected to instruments, synthesizers, microphones, lights and a slide projector made a web of noise, which created a life support system that both relaxed and trapped the actors' power of movement and vocal projection.

The performers had white faces and wore the kind of clothes respectable parents might have worn in the films, and they moved between scenes like acrobats. In addition to Schoenheimer and Mestel's virtuoso performances, Steve Kinnear as Billy with his Brierley Kesteven mobile mask face and manual drumming and Chris Turner as The Speaker with her Alice in Wonderland innocence and her demented Russian child starry confusion to the haunting feed and the moments of frozen stillness that so characterised the production.

VIC. (cont.)

MANSFIELD STARK

Mansfield Stark by Peter King. Adapted for the stage from the works of Katherine Mansfield — *German At Home*, *Psychology*, *At The Bay*, *La Mama*. *Caliban* translated to Zoe Siskin. *Playbox* opened November 26, 1981.
Director: Peter King
Cast: David Kendall, Rob Melhrem, Jillian Murray and Meredith Rogers.

As both the BBC and the CBC Downstage show proved, Katherine Mansfield's short stories are uniquely amenable to dramatic adaption. In *Mansfield Stark*, Peter King included material from two of Mansfield's best known and most autobiographical stories, "At The Bay" and "Psychology", as well as the lesser known pieces, "Psychology" and "German At Home". King's treatment opened up the dramatic narrative by joining into dialogue both characters' thoughts and authored comment. This allowed for a richer, less naturalistic performance style while it maintained and accentuated Mansfield's voice.

The production assumed a knowledge of Mansfield's work useful as one needed to be aware that there was no literal connection between the three pieces. Staged with a minimum of props and only indications of costume on a hair, house-hold stage, *Mansfield Stark* relied on the invention of its actors — David Kendall, Rob Melhrem, Jillian Murray and Meredith Rogers.

Each piece had a distinct and different feel. "At The Bay" was transformational performance to create the various sub-worlds surrounding the Burnell household: parents, children, neighbours and servants; "Psychology" was darker and more Strindbergian in its delineation of the failure of an intellectual approach to love, while "German At Home", a beautiful encounter between a gently patriotic Englishwoman and assorted Teutonic dignitary obsessives went for full-on comic madness in the manner of Brecht's *Olla* or Dickens' *Golden Balls*.

The performances were precise, subtle and versatile, and as the four actors played more than twenty parts between them, individual careers are difficult to rank above the strong ensemble work. However Jillian Murray and Rob Melhrem stood out in "At The Bay" as surely as Meredith Rogers and David Kendall do in "Psychology", and as all did in the infamous "German At Home" in "At The Bay" the addresses that arose through multiple playing created excitement with the professional theme of the piece. It is

Jillian Murray played both Linda Burnell, the young woman yearning for a fulfillment greater than that provided by her husband and four children, and Linda's sister-in-law Beryl who dreams of a passionate lover, as well as Linda's daughter, Kerna, the sensitive little girl on the brink of some darker adult awareness.

While Rob Melhrem was equally credible as the youngest daughter, Lotte, as he was as Harry Kemmer the fastest and savviest man at the bay. In "Psychology", Meredith Rogers and David Kendall created an intense and painfully funny duo as the couple unable to declare their feelings and displacing all in a tense and static discussion of the importance of the psychological novel.

King's direction was inventive and understated, building delicate, unusual images and undercutting them with moments of punning perception and cracking wit, as indeed Mansfield does herself.

THREE MASQUERADERS

Playbox Masquerade — *The 9 To 5's*, *The Merry-Go-Round Person*, *The Old Woman At The Window* — *La Mama*, *Caliban* opened November 26, 1981.
Directed and Performed by Elizabeth Patterson, Director: Jerry Kemp.

Elizabeth Patterson's "masqueraders" encompass theatre, performance art, soft sculpture and a hybrid of mask and puppetry. Her inspiration is the Yoruba masqueraders of Nigeria who cover themselves completely in cloth and create both a character and its environment.

Since finishing the VIC drama course in

1979, Patterson has created four such masqueraders — "The Gay Person", "The Old Woman At The Window", "The 9 to 5" and "The Merry-Go-Round Person" — making the costumes, writing the scripts and performing the pieces solo. The first three pieces were shown at La Mama last year. Since then Patterson has been working with director Jerry Kemp and she has resulted in considerable rewriting and reworking of "The Old Woman At The Window" and "The 9 To 5", as well as the development of "The Merry-Go-Round Person" through improvisation.

"The Merry-Go-Round Person" marks a departure in Patterson's work: she is no longer completely covered by the costume but rather wears the merry-go-round as a hat and draws from the pockets of her dress the weird little characters she puts to ride on it. Whereas in "The Old Woman At The Window", Patterson is completely covered by a stretched cloth, glove-like mask, and in turn enclosed in the window-frame/cheat from which she surveys the world and comments on the affairs of her family by way of the letters and photos she takes from the drawers of the chest. And in "The 9 To 5", she is the central "dummy" of a group of seven franchised men and women — retail-hour shoppers and commuters who press in on her with every move she makes.

The main difference between the first La Mama show and this, is a more (ward) self-revelation, both in the unmaking of the performer, and in the increasing use of autobiographical and personal fantasy in the imagery and writing. Kemp's work with Patterson has sharpened the performance overall and led to a more direct relationship with the audience, with the result that the work now seems more at home in a theatre than a gallery.



Elizabeth Patterson as *The Merry-Go-Round Person* in *Three Masqueraders*. Photo: Jeff Baskin.

W.A.

A flourish of desperation

by Margaret Luke

DEMOLITION JOB

COURT NAPPING

SOMETHING FUNNY HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM

GASLIGHT

Court-Napping: Written by Neil Thomas. Perth: Opened 26 Nov 1981.

Original material by James Ryan, Alan Cowell, Ivan King, Caroline McKenna, Edgar Mitchell, Anne Wright and Joan Volery.

Director: Edgar Mitchell. Design: William David. Cast: James Ryan, Caroline McKenna, Martin O'Flynn, Joan Sydney, Dennis Pollock as the judge. (Professional)

Gaslight: Thomas Wright. Music: Charles Brown. Lyrics: Martin O'Flynn. The Mercury Theatre. Perth: Opened December 1 1981.

Director: Stephen Barry. Design: Alan Volery. Musical Director: David Bond. Choreography: Kevin Johnson. Cast: Anne Gilman-McLean, or Elizabeth Mackinnon, John Harcourt, Bill Harrison with Terry Johnson, James Beattie, Edy or Mandy, Kevin Johnson, Dean Harcourt, Linda Haddock, Raymond Dugan. (Professional)

Gaslight by Patrick Hamilton. Playhouse Perth WA. Actors' Company. Opened 16 December 1981.

Director: Jay Walsh. Design: Alan Volery. Cast: Helen Dugg, Andy King, Polly Lee, Joely Polley, Phil Wilkinson, Ron McQueen. (Professional)

Demolition Job by Gordon Goshorn. Hole in the Wall. Perth: Opened October 27 1981.

Director: Edgar Mitchell. Designer: Eddie Harcourt. Cast: Andy King, Peter Hardy, Christopher Johnson. (Professional)

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum. The Mercury Theatre.

Director: Anne McLean. Cast: Neil Harvey, Martin O'Flynn, Joely Polley, James Ryan, Louise Collins, James Beattie, Ron Harcourt, Phil Wilkinson, Ron King. (Professional)

In Perth, 1981 ended with a flourish of desperation. Theatres were battling for their existence, and audiences were sparse, if not thread, at least lavish quantities of cake.

Two big musicals, a witty revue, a Victorian thriller and a visit from Supergirl Edna. And — yet — there was a morge of meat as well: there was *Demolition Job*, and also a brave new venture in University-based theatre.

When Gordon Goshorn's *Demolition Job* started in the Hole, there were fears that the

little might prove prophetic: the theatre was one of the Disposed Eight victims of the Federal funding cuts. Meanwhile, thanks mostly to prompt fire-set by the WA Arts Council, and then to federal mind-changing, the future looks more promising.

It would have been hard to find a play that illustrated the value of the Hole better than *Demolition Job*. The theatre is small enough to take chances with both new playwrights and actors (here it did both) and yet it's big enough to make an impact. The play wasn't really a risk — it came well recommended — but *Best Play Awards* don't necessarily filter through to potential audiences. The play had to prove itself, and Edgar Mitchell gave it the production it deserved: subtle re-exploration of character, lively in its humour, and convincingly explosive when the well-established tensions broke loose.

Andy King was first-rate as the no-hoper with a chip on his shoulder — a construction finding a sort of belated, pinned sympathy. In marvellous contrast was Peter Hardy as the other worker — astutely good-humoured, and, seeing drama when the two old school "mates" meet unexpectedly, doing his cunning best to stir up the action. Christopher Johnson, in his lone professional appearance after a student theatre background, provided a thoughtful and sympathetic study of the scurrying victim.

And then came the really reason. The Hole celebrated with an entertainment seemingly dedicated to outgunning former *Charles Court*, entitled *Court Napping*, it was very much a victory (revue or style, but better in overall quality).

With material written by the local theatre community (and courtesy) it was

probable that much of the satire would be aimed at political phobias, cultural poisons and West Australian weirdies, though Edgar Mitchell, who shaped and directed the show, had shrewdly judged how much "across" material could be tolerated.

Obviously the most inventive, and certainly the funniest, item, was a severely budget-cut version of *Way and Peace* performed by one actor and one stage manager with the aid of some comical dolls (horses), a mattress (for burning Moscow) and a seemingly endless assortment of maps and handgear representing a cast of thousands. With a lineup like that, who needs funds anyway?

Joan Sydney also scored a personal triumph with one of the few non-revue moments of the show — an updated version of "Daddy Boy".

At the show-place *His Majesty's* two audience-pleasers followed each other in rapid succession.

Something Funny Happened On The Way To The Forum always seems to me the long tale as an attention-getting device, as though someone of its appeal as a popular musical. The basic idea of an anachronistic Roman lark is funny, some of the language is lyrical, but the story development in the second half flags terribly. Also, of course, Stephen Sondheim's peculiar blend of music alternately useful and gaudy, sets up its own problems (it is now fashionable to praise his least attractive songs extravagantly in the name of their monetary and dissonant equals greatness, but audiences for musicals don't know about that).

Jenny McNa, dancing, waddy concentrated on imaginative comedy routines,



Demolition Job at the Hole in the Wall



The Player's "Never Sleeping"

as the cost, on the whole, was stronger on acting than on singing. Both the sight-gags at the first ball, and the breathless anti-character chase at the end were handled with great skill. The costumes and personalities (especially James Hampton's Hy-Hy-men) were fine — the language came mainly with the songs, where the honest-to-God exceptions were the solo by Doreana (Jennifer Valdez) and Maurice Ogden as Senta leading what turned out to be the highlight of the show. "Everybody ought to have a Maid".

Neil Finner as the star Prologus/Pseudolus (called heavily 4!) on his own persona, and the audience clearly loved him.

Amor is a different kettle of fish. Even though, except for "Tomorrow" and "Easy Street", the songs go in one ear and out the other, the whole thing moves at a tremendous pace, is polished and witty, and was intelligently cast. The people who were supposed to sing, sing, and although Jill Perryman played the monstrous Miss Hannagan even more grotesquely than one remembered her from the McEwan production, she was still memorable, and Kevin Johnston still displays that unique and classy style of dancing scribbled as far back as the great musicals of the fifties.

The kids were beautifully rehearsed and personable, and the Amos more than a

match for these Eastern States counterparts. Edgar Moxcalf gave Daddy Warbucks an attractively quizzical touch of irony, and Raymond Dugan was superbly elegant as FDR. A special joy was Terry Johnson as Grace Farrell, the secretary — one of the few singers around who seems equally at home in opera and musical.

The production as a whole was one of the best things one remembers from Stephen Barry.

While "The National Theatre at the Playhouse" was presenting *Amor* at His Majesty's Theatre, the Playhouse itself was being put to good use by an enterprising group of actors who, rather than facing a "resting period", decided to form themselves into the WA Actors' Co-operative, and without subsidy or other safety-net put on Patrick Hamilton's evergreen thriller *Gashlyt*, directed by Jay Walsh.

Alan Murphy's neatly appressed Victorian room with huge gas-light (electric stage, created the right atmosphere. Andy King made a chillingly sadistic villain (the fact that he was a murderer seemed far less frightening than his calculated mental cruelty) whilst Helen Trapp wailed successfully between pathetic vulnerability and frenzied hysteria. (Were Victorian women really driven to these extremes, one wonders?) There was a nicely macabre goody detective, played by Phil

Wibbham, a port rascal by Polly Law, and Jeff Valdez was wasted in the part of sympathetic housekeeper.

Another new Company was the University-based La Barraca La Segunda Compania, directed by Cliff Gellens. Despite the pessimistic title (inspired by Federico Lorca) the company showed plenty of nerve with a rather strangely assorted group of plays.

Before either of these were two one-acters by Ayckbourn (*Countdown*) and Alan Owen (*Warrior*), whereas the second half was entirely devoted to Lorca's *The Love of Don Perichito* and *Belina in the Garden*.

The *Love* play was miserably exhilarating. Lorca's blood imagery was here mixed with bawdy and sad humor, and the audience was given ample scope to smirk and interpret the symbols of this tale about an aging doctor who marries unwisely. Tim Wilson as Don Perichito was both funny and moving — he has appeared in a number of university productions and is clearly someone to be watched.

All too often student theatre restricts itself either to safe productions related to the year's English syllabus, or to shocking the Establishment, and it was refreshing to find a group with an approach that was neither dilly-dally academic nor slavishly trendy. May the string of their successes be as long as their noses!

Theatre Guide



ACT

THEATRE ACT

Playboards (496488) *On Our Selection* adapted by George Whaley, director, George Whaley Starts Feb 20
For entries contact Janet Hawley on 494789

NSW

ENSEMBLE THEATRE (9256877)

Black Ball Game by Don Webb, director, Don Reid, designer, Warren Field Starts Feb 4

GENESIS THEATRE (9692928)

Macbeth by William Shakespeare, director, Ray Ainsworth Starts Feb 5

GRIFFIN THEATRE COMPANY

(333617)
Stables Theatre: Cheap Thrills by Grant Fiebert, designer, Jack Riosho Into Feb. New production starts mid Feb.

HUNTER VALLEY THEATRE COMPANY (549262326)

I Am Work by John O'Donoghue, director, Anne Neeme, music, Allan McFadden, with entire HVTC company and Vic Rooney. Re-run of this highly successful Newcastle drama Feb 1-6, 12 and 13.

KIRIBILLI PUB THEATRE (921415)

The Buzsoneer Show, producer, Bill Young, with Zoe Bertram, Paul Bertram and Marge McCose Throughout Feb.

MARIAN STREET THEATRE (4983168)

What The Butler Saw by Joe Orton, director, John Wilson, with Ron Fraser, Joen Bruce, Peg Gullam and Simon Burke. One of Orton's masterpieces about sanity and madness. Starts Feb 12.

MUSIC LOFT THEATRE (9775883)

Have A Ball devised by Peggy Mortimer, director, Peggy Mortimer, with Gus Toppans, Dean Toppans, Gerry Gallagher, Janet Brown and Peggy Mortimer Starts Feb 3

NEW THEATRE (5153403)

Flying Blind by Bill Morrison, director, John Tassier, designer, John Pryce Jones. A pungent farce about Northern Ireland. Throughout Feb.

NIMROD THEATRE (8995003)

Upstairs: Welcome The Bright World by Stephen Sewell, director, Neil Annfield, designer, Eamon D'Arcy, with Cathy Downes, Michele Fawdon, Russell Newman, Barry Otto, Katrina Foster, Max Gilkes and Martin Harris. Sewell's latest play about the contradictions of modern, industrial society. Throughout Feb.

NSW THEATRE OF THE DEAF (3571300)

Twelve for primary schools and **The Dead Man in History** for secondary schools, director, Ian Watson. Throughout Feb.

THE ROCKS PLAYERS (5990333)

The Philanthropist by Christopher Hampton, director, Frank McKinnery. To Feb 20.

SEYMOUR CENTRE (8920532)

York Theatre: Erastus by Ron Elisha, director, Bruce Myles, with Frederick Parlane, Gary Down and Roger Oakley. Starts Feb 4.
Downstairs: Seachest by Caryl Brahms and Ned Sherris, with David Riverswood. Two MTC productions about two greats of the 20th century. To Feb 13.

SHOPFRONT THEATRE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE (5883948)

Weekend workshops include playbuilding, mime, dance, puppetry, design, radio and video. **Blackout and Blacker**, with Martin Blacker. Feb 13, 14, 20, 21, 27 and 28.

SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY (25586)

Crime Theatre, SOH: You Can't Take A Walk You by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart, director, George Ogilvie, designers, Kathleen Frederickson and Anna French, with Tyler Coppin, John Frawley, Jane Hardens, Jim Kemp, Margot Lee, Tim McKinnis, Carol Raye and Geoffrey Rush. Depression-type entertainment? To Feb 13.



THEATRE ROYAL (2318111)

Chicago by Fred Ebb and Bob Fosse, director, Richard Wherrett, musical director, Peter Casey, with Nancye Hayne, Geraldine Turner, Terry Donovan, Jack Connell, George Spafford and J.P. Webster. STC's outstanding production returns yet again. Throughout Feb.

QLD

ARTS THEATRE (363344)

The American Agent by Spencer McPherson, director, Gordon Shaw. Premiere of a new comedy by local writer — a spoof on this world of the secret agent. Starts Feb 5.
The Magic Kneel by Michael Noonan (children's theatre), director, Lynne Wright. **Adventures**, complete with villain, of a boy and his dog. Starts Feb 13.

LA QUOTE THEATRE (361622)

Back To The Cremorne, director and designer, Graeme Johnston. A vaudeville show, relating the days of Brisbane's old Cremorne Theatre. Starts Dec 19.

QUEENSLAND THEATRE COMPANY (2213661)

SGIO Theatre: Hello Dolly by Michael Stewart and Jerry Herman, director, Alan Edwards. Based on Thornton Wilder's **The Matchmaker**. A gaily musical to start the year. Feb 2-20.

TN THEATRE COMPANY (3629433)

Twelfth Night Theatre: Romeo and

Theatre Guide



(continued)

Adapted by William Shakespeare, director Bryan Nason, designers Bryan Nason and David Bell, with Geoff Carwright, Victoria Arthur and Jennifer Blockledge. Shakespeare's personally popular story of a star crossed love. Starts Feb 18. For entries contact Jeremy Hodgman on 3772519.

SA

ADELAIDE FESTIVAL CENTRE TRUST (340121)

The Playhouse. *Not Now Darling* by Cooney and Chapman, director Ray Cooney, with Andrew Sachs, Leslie Phillips and Ann Sydney. A laugh a minute farce. To Feb 3.



ADELAIDE REPERTORY THEATRE SOCIETY (2125777)

Arts Theatre. *Present Laughter* by

Noel Coward, director, Graham Duckett, designer, Geoffrey Ashton. Noel Coward wrote this play for himself — reaching forty but wanting to be the eternal youth. Feb 20-27.

FESTIVAL THEATRE (310121)

Edgley International presents *Barnum* by Bramble, Coleman and Stewart, director, Barry Lee, musical director, Noel Smith, choreographer, Barry Lee, set designer, David Mitchell, lighting designer, Craig Miller, with Reg Livermore. The big musical spectacular of the year, based on the life of P.T. Barnum. Plenty of circus tricks and razzamatazz. To Feb 20.

Q THEATRE (223665)

Prude and Prejudice adapted by Betty Quinn from Jane Austen's novel, director, Jean Marshall. How to marry off five daughters with only one eligible man in the offing. Starts Feb 27.

VIC

AUSTRALIAN NOUVEAU THEATRE (8993253)

Upstairs. Anthel presents *Illuminated Ducks* by Hazel Barry, director, Elena Evrein. A new Australian play with songs. To Feb 20. With *Strength and Delicacy* by Kinsey and Lynn. Starts Feb 24. Downstairs. *Ruins* by Michael Deutsch, director, Marc Adam.

ARENA THEATRE (2401937)

Arts workshops for adults and children start Feb.

THE COMEDY CAFE BYO THEATRE RESTAURANT (4192959)

Bustion of Tran, written, produced and performed by Mary, Steve, Geoff and Rod. Throughout Feb.

COMEDY THEATRE (8623233)

The Rocky Horror Show by Richard O'Brien, director Richard Horley. A creditable revival with Daniel Abner as Frank 'n' Furter. Throughout Feb.

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (8963233)

A musical show with Tommy Steele.

HANDSPAN THEATRE (415978)

Performing at the Adelaide Fringe.



Festival. In schools productions of *The Banyan* at Barkers Creek, evening productions of *Jandy Malone* and *The Nine O'Clock Tiger*. Starts Feb 24.

LA MAMA (3476655)

Shen by Paul Caster and company, director, Paul Caster, with Alie Madden and Anna Moore. *Wed to Sun* for 3 weeks.

LAST LAUGH THEATRE RESTAURANT (4196339)

International Comedy Festival. *The Brass Band* just returned from America and Jean Paul Bell from Sydney. Starts Jan 12. *The Whistle Family* with Captain Hook. Starts Feb.





MUSHROOM TROUPE (3573384)
Starts with children's spectacular
Bombers at Alexander Theatre

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY
(8599112)

Athenaeum Minna Von Saxeheim by
Gottfried Lessing. Adapted by Ray
Lawler, director, Ray Lawler;
designer, Paul Kallner Starts Feb
10. *Russell Street* Virginia by Edna
O'Brien, director, Judith Alexander,
designer, Richard Pinn. One-woman
Virginia Woolf show. *Athenaeum 2*
Manon Pearl by David Knight,
director, William Gluth, designer,
Mark Wager

PLAYBOX THEATRE COMPANY
(8348888)

Playbox at the National Theatre
Steven Berkoff and the London
Theatre Group in *The Fall Of The
House Of Usher*, Berkoff's stage
production of an Edgar Allan Poe
story from *The Tales Of Mystery and
Imagination* Starts Feb 24
Upstairs: *Lovely Lanny Lower* by
Barry Dickink, director, Rex
Gramphorn, designer, Sandra
Mallock, Dickens latest comic-tragedy
on Lower

UNIVERSAL THEATRE (4183777)

Magomba Festival Of Drama starts
Feb 26
For entries contact Connie Kratzer
on 8514448

WA

ART GALLERY OF WA

Gallery 3: Lear — *The Monologue*,
director, David George, with Edgar
Metcalf. An experimental adaptation
of Shakespeare's play, only Lear's
lines are delivered in a landscape of
paintings and within a soundscape
created by an exciting American
musician, Greg Goodman. Feb 27

CIRCUS OZ

McCallum Park, Feb 7-21

ONIC THEATRE RESTAURANT

Julien Chagon — rubber faced —
combined mime and the spoken word
for an evening of hilarious visual
comedy Starts Feb 8

DOLPHIN THEATRE

The Swan River Stage Company
presents *The Dreamers* by Jack
Davis, director, Andrew Ross. The
play examines the life of an
Aboriginal family in the SW of WA.
Feb 2,8,9,13,18 and 20. Matinees Feb
7,14 and 21

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE

The Black Theatre Of Prague
presents *A Week Of Dreams*. The
programme is like an animal cartoon

The Black Theatre Of Prague
performs magic and brings
surrealism onto the stage.
Piccolo Teatro Di Milano Italy's most
famous theatre company and
developers of the great Italian theatre
tradition *Commedia dell'Arte*. The
company's legendary Harlequin
Fernando Solari will introduce each
scene in English Starts Feb 24

HOLE IN THE WALL THEATRE

Cloud Nine by Caryl Churchill. A
hilarious and outrageous modern
comedy which delights in abundance,
sexual conditioning and role playing
Starts Feb 5

My Name Is Pablo Picasso by Mary
Gage. A play set in Montmartre
where the young Picasso is living
with his first mistress, La Belle
Fernande, and struggling to make a
name for himself. One night while
Picasso is painting, Fernande, an old
man appears and insists he can

reveal Picasso's future. A late night
show at 10.45pm on Feb
11,12,18,20,26 and 27

OCTAGON THEATRE

London Theatre Group presents *Test-
Tube Heart* by Steven Berkoff, *The
Fall Of The House Of Usher*, Steven
Berkoff and Terry James. An
adaptation of two Edgar Allan Poe
short stories, perfect vehicles for the
Group's style Feb 4-20
Miss Margarine's May by Roberto
Alfaydo, with Estelle Passora Starts
Feb 22



PERTH CONCERT HALL
Robin Archer at Large Feb 23

NATIONAL THEATRE COMPANY

Playhouse: *The Fields Of Heaven* by
Dorothy Hewett, director, Rodney
Fisher. Set in a hillside district in
the Great Southern area of WA,
during the period 1929-1951. It tells
of destructive love and the
annihilation of a fragile ecology in
which the interlocking lives and
conflicting values of the older settlers
and migrants clash causing tragedy
and exile Starts Feb 9
For entries contact Margaret Schwan
on 2411178

OPERA -INFO

LYRIC OPERA AT LAST

Allying fears of yet another year of inaction in Brisbane, the newly formed Lyric Opera of Queensland's Consulting Director Anthony Jeffrey has announced highlights of the repertory planned for later this year.

A new *Troiseme* is proposed from the internationally acclaimed production/design team of Anthony Beech and John Scodman who most recently scored a major success with the YSO's *Finta* last year. The planned Queensland production started off life as a possible joint venture with the Victorian but that seems to have fallen by the wayside.

Another opera from the same team — the by now much-travelled *SA Casa Gas Ferra* — will be revived with Joan Carlen, recently awarded an OBE in the New Year Honours, as Ferra.

After his first directing success with the SA *HMS Anafre*, Duane Olson will produce a new *Salustie* designed by Peter Cooke. There are rumours that this too may be shared interstate but no details have been released.

Finally, another opera, this time of the French school, with Offenbach's *Le Belle Helene* will complete the list.

It's an ambitious season for a fledgling company on still too far limited a grant to sustain the level of activity necessary to see it into the soon-to-be-completed Arts Centre.

Meanwhile, the hunt for the general manager goes on.

YSO WITHDRAWS RHEINGOLD

Hard on the heels of the announcement of The Australian Opera's *Ring* cycle, came the news that the YSO had abandoned their earlier plan to commence their own series of productions in late 1982 with *Rheingold*.

Obviously it would have been absurd to have had two companies charging away at such mammoth undertakings and reason has prevailed.

There is such a vital complementary role which both companies can play in providing audiences with real breadth of repertoire experience. Let us hope that the rather childish waging that has characterised so much of their relationship in recent years is over and that both can get down to the most important business of presenting Melbourne with a broad spectrum of quality performances and productions.

NEW SKIPPER TRIMS SAIL!

In a plethora of announcements toward the end of last year, Patrick Veach the General Manager of the Australian Opera provided a package of house clearing advice of interest in the administration, sales and repertory areas alike.

The opera-going public is now thoroughly aware that in one move 22 positions in the company were eliminated. It was not 22 choruses as one mistakenly suspected weekly alarmed and ordered in a number of cases, the positions were either unfilled at the time or the reductions resulted from resignation or a revised administrative and production structure. Heads rolled earlier, but there was a tendency — not entirely discouraged by the Opera's management — to make it sound like a bloodbath. "Firm measures are being taken."

In an allied move the appointment of Jerry Bell, previously with the International Authority, as Development Administrator is a hopeful sign. It is the first time a woman has held a senior management position in the company and indicates that Veach is consciously looking for new energies and perspectives in his

new look administration

After the cost savings came the plans. Advance notice was given of key repertory decisions for the next three years of which the *Ring* to lead off in 1983 is the most outstanding.

An interesting innovation for the company over this period will be staged performances of two operas — *Sosnenski* in 1983 and *Verdi's Aida* in 1984. A new production of *L'Eclair d'amour* will appear next year, as will a partial refurbishment of John Copley's 1975 production of *Così*.

In all it would appear to represent a breakthrough in planning on a number of fronts and a prescience of artistic sensibility which has been all too rare in recent years.

A RESIDENT BRUNHILDE

As part of the *Ring* package, Mr Veach also announced that the noted Finnish soprano Rina Hunter will be based in Australia for the next three years.

Miss Hunter is undoubtedly one of the significant Wagners singers today and her decision will be welcomed by everyone who has heard her in the last year, whether on the concert platform or on the stage.



John Copley — refurbished production of *Così* this year



Patrick Veach

OPERA - FEATURE

AMAZING EVENTS

Opera and the Adelaide Festival

by Justin Macdonnell

With the approach of the twelfth Adelaide Festival of Arts later this month, and with all the attendant brochures of reported productions, companies and individual artists, it is easy to overlook the immensely long and productive contribution which the Festival has made to opera in this country. It is an extraordinary record of achievement in new works, Australian premieres and among events which has been chalked up over 22 years. For example, in taking the classification of "opera", which I delineate below, there have, in this period, been 29 Australian premieres of which six have been world premieres. Of these the Australian Opera has been responsible for four, the State Opera of South Australia for six, the Intimate Opera Group for nine, the Festival itself for eight and teaching institutions for two.

In a list as diverse as Janáček, Tippett, Britten, Berg, Walton, Maxwell-Davies and Sibelius, the credits read like an encyclopedia of 20th century opera and it should be remarked that with the sole exception of Britten's parable operas, toured in 1970 by the English Opera Group, and The Fires of London's presentation of *John Donne's* *Masses*, these productions have been entirely Australian-based.

In concluding this examination I have for consideration of space omitted such things as concert pro-

ductors, selections from opera by various small bodies, amateur operettas and G and S productions, but even allowing for that the following statistics of premieres alone are extraordinary.

Elizabethan Trust Opera/Australian Opera Salome 1960, *Aradour auf Naros* 1962, *Troilus and Cressida* 1964, *Porgy and Bess* (in association with the NZ opera) 1966, *The Rape of Lucrece* 1972 and, *Wozzek* 1976.

Intimate Opera Group, *The Telephone* (Menotti), *The Scary* (Holby), *A Dinner Engagement* (Berkley), 1960, *Gentleman's Island* (Hartovitz), *La Fata Morgana* (Poulenc), *The Pious Dances* (Benjamin), 1962, *The Night Bell* (Donizetti), *Three's Company* (Hopkins), 1962, *Master Peter's Puppet Show* (de Falla), *If The Cap Fits* (Bush), *Suzanne's Secrets* (Walli Ferrar), 1966, *The Minus* (Galluschi), *Chamberlain* (Barak), 1968, *The Old Maid and the Thief* (Menotti), *L'Heure Espagnole* (Ravel), 1970, *La Serva Padrona* (Pergolesi), *The Wandering Scholar* (Holst), *The Glowering Gate* (Gianluigi-Hicks), 1972.

In the earlier years of the Festival under a succession of directors, their musical/theatrical tastes inevitably influenced the choice of work. At that time the AETT Opera took the opportunity to premiere a number of works of major importance in the repertory and, as much as it was in the 60's the only significant pro-

fessional opera producing body of scale in the country, it made the running operatically through to the early 70's when with the rise of the SA State Company the balance shifted remarkably the other way — as was to some degree inevitable. The impact which the State Opera productions, especially in 1974, 1978 and 1980, have created make it easy to overlook the range and diversity of the work presented in those early days by the Trust. The 1960 production of Strauss's *Salome* while not at the time accounted a great success, was at least an airing of a significant piece at a time when audiences' tastes were very far from being as sophisticated as they are today. It was also noteworthy as being one of the last public appearances in Australia of Dame Joan Hammond before her retirement.

At the following Festival another Strauss opera, the almost equally enigmatic *Aradour auf Naros*, was presented in a curious production by Charles Hickman. Again the critics were less than enthusiastic, but the tradition had been established of productions which were new and interesting in some way being introduced into the repertory and to the awareness of audiences in this country. The first real coup came in 1964 with the Australian premiere of Walton's remarkable *Troilus and Cressida* which amongst other interesting features starred the late Marie Collier. It was

the first almost completely unknown work to be undertaken not only by the Festival but by the Trust Company itself and received a surprisingly warm and enthusiastic reception from both critics and public at the time though sadly it was not presented elsewhere.

1966 was a year of great turmoil in the Trust Opera Company as a result of financial pressures and the Trust itself undertook to co-sponsor a tour of the New Zealand Opera Company's *Porgy and Bess* with a combined Black American and Maori cast, led by the remarkable talent of Ima H. Wata. The production was probably a greater success in Adelaide than elsewhere in the country and filled what would otherwise have been an important gap in the programme that year.

1968 was perhaps the first year when the Elizabethan Opera Company was on anything like the secure footing from which the Australian Opera was ultimately to grow. The Festival housed an impressive line up of three standard repertory pieces: *Tosca* with Mary Collier, *Trio Goblins* and Donald Smith Verdi's *Don Carlos* and Stephan Rein's remarkable production of *Tannhäuser*.

During this period, at quite the opposite end of the spectrum, a small-scaled but, in its own way, no less remarkable achievement was being chalked up in the unique contribution of the Intimate Opera Group, its history has been well chronicled elsewhere, but bears acclamation in the context of the Adelaide Festival. Adelaide has always had an important advantage over the other BAPH states in having a strong resident pool of professional singers. This was largely the historical result of two factors: the attention during the early 60's and 70's by the ABC of the Adelaide Singers as a chamber choir of between 12 and 16 artists on a permanent salaried basis and, secondly, the presence of a strong school of singing and opera studies at the Elder Conservatorium. From these two sources were drawn at regular intervals the ensembles which formed the basis for the Intimate Opera Group. They performed in schools, undertook country tours with the Arts Council and gave intermittent city seasons of one act works by leading contemporary composers with a success and during that would be almost incomprehensible today. The



New Opera's *The Tragicomedy of Mr. Ironside* (Photo: Joyce Mervin)



Adelaide Opera's *Uncle Ivanhoe* for the 1980 Festival



New Opera's *The Lonesome Journey of Charlie the Lamb* (1981 Festival)

Group had in Kathleen Steele Scott, who once described herself as "an opera renegade thinly disguised as an establishment lady", a remarkable leader with a taste not so much for the grand warhorses (though she was far from averse to them), but for what one might call the "accessible contemporary" and a nose second to none for sniffing them out.

But it was in the biennial Festival that IOG came into its own through being able to muster the forces necessary for more ambitious seasons, again of one-acters, and pick out the very small venues they played. They were to be found in church halls and school auditoriums with names that only Adelaide's curiously evangelical/peasant-farmer ancestry could devise, until finally coming to rest in the then new AMP theatre. These venues might not always have been the most exquisitely perfect for opera but the standards maintained were high and many a singer now gracing the stages of the Sydney Opera House, the Coliseum, Covent Garden and half a dozen German houses got their break there. The track record of adventurous programmes and catholicity of taste in the works listed previously, speak for themselves.

As a result of this combined programming through the Festival from the Elizabethan Trust Opera and IOG, Adelaide and visiting audiences were probably exposed to more diverse operatic experiences over that period than in any other city in Australia. It was a tradition that, in music theatre particularly, the Festival has continued to build on. The tour by the English Opera Group with the British *Burning Fire* Janacek, *Prophet Sam* and *Corleone River* conducted by the composer and starring (if that's the correct expression) Peter Pears, Thomas Hemley and Norman Luxon was a theatrical and operatic revolution, not only at its Australian premiere at the Festival, but on its subsequent national tour. Even in the cruel acoustic and dramatically oppressive circumstances of Bondythen Hall one was aware that an extraordinary event was taking place. The early days of the New Opera (now State Opera) were to some degree consciously modelled on this example — a fate, sadly for a variety of reasons, never to be realised. Operatically it was

one of the key innovations by the Festival up to that point. There followed in 1974 the commissioning by the Festival of Peter Maxwell Davies' *Mus Danceshorne's Maggot* for performance by Mary Thomas and The Firm of London which whilst essentially a concert performance was nevertheless a piece of acutely observed and agonisingly well-played music theatre as Australia had seen up to that time.

1976 followed in a similar vein with the visit of Hans Werner Henze whose remarkable *El Comendador* was given, this time with an ensemble recruited from within Australia and featuring the now sadly expatriated talents of Lyndon Terrisno as the black Huguenot slave.

1974 and 1976 reflect in many ways the key changes that were coming over opera generally in Australia and whilst no one factor alone can account for them, a number combined in Adelaide to create some remarkable developments. With the appointment of Anthony Steel as General Manager of the Adelaide Festival Centre and initially Artistic Adviser to and later Artistic Director of the Festival there was for the first time since John Bishop a director whose personal commitment was to music, especially 20th century music and music theatre.

In as much as during the intervening years between 1972 and 1974 IOG had been transformed into New Opera, his concerns in this direction found a willing reception, given the background of that company. The Australian Opera had informed Steel that it would not be available for the Festival that year because of the recent opening of the Sydney Opera House and the commitment to building up its season there in the February/March period. Much to the alarm of his colleagues and the Festival's Board of Governors, Steel turned to the infant State Opera Company — barely six months old — and proposed that they should fill the gap in the recently completed Festival then with Mozart's *Idomeneo*. With the realisation that only the newly-born can master, the company replied that they would prefer to stage Janacek's *Makropoulos Case*. Steel immediately said that if it had to be Janacek then it had rather be *The Excursions of Mr Bronek* which, when the Company replied that it was

not exactly the opera on everybody's lips, Steel, with that combination of aplomb and tenacity which I trust will never desert him, declared that that was "exactly the point." The result, after a series of misadventures too numerous to relate, was John Tinker's misanthropically effective production and the Festival scored a major triumph. It was not only the first Janacek production in Australia but also the first English language production of the work and one of the few in any language outside its native Czechoslovakia.

In 1976 the reverse was true, the Australian Opera was not only available, but prepared to assemble the forces for another first. Berg's *Wozzeck* introduced to Australian audiences the outstanding talents of Elijah Moshinsky, the young Australian producer who had recently created such a sensation with his production of *Peter Grimes* at Covent Garden. It's a nice coincidence that he will not only direct the State Opera's production of, at long last, *Makropoulos Case* in 1982, but has also been announced as Artistic Director for the 1984 Festival.

Again the presence of the Festival Theatre with its extraordinarily wide wing space enabled an almost filmic treatment of the episodic Berg masterpiece and established in Australian Moshinsky's reputation as an innovative and daring producer which has subsequent *Midsummer Night's Dream* for the Australian Opera only endorsed.

Regrettably the very nature of the production with its laterally moving trucks could not be accommodated at any other theatres in the country and the resulting telefilm of it failed to capture any of the remarkable clarity and "hard-edgedness" of the stage version.

Meanwhile the State Company under their new Musical Director Myer Friedman played at the much smaller Scott Theatre to a sell-out season of two commissioned Australian pieces. Larry Sitsky's *Fury Tales* and *The Lamentable Reign of Charles the Last* by George Dreyfus. Neither enjoyed much critical success although the Sitsky piece merits wider consideration than it received. The Dreyfus work was described by one critic as more a university review than

an opera. Whatever its merits, it touched the raw nerve of sensitivities already exposed by the recent constitutional crisis culminating in the infamous acts of November 11th 1975.

Depending on one's lights, it was either the best or the worst of all possible times to represent Whitlam, Dawson, the Royal family and other institutions in a somewhat Aristophanic guise on stage. If audiences were bemused by the contributions of both the National and State Opera companies that year, events were to become even more so in 1978. Revisiting the roles once again, the State Opera returned to the Festival Theatre with Tappett's *A Midsummer Marriage* graced by the presence of the composer himself. Myer Friedman's musical direction elucidated the complex — some would be bold enough to say meandering — musical idiom in almost exactly inverse proportion to the degree in which Adrian Slack's production further muddled the text. Critics, however, by and large hailed the event as the best thing since Ben Hur.

Mad, however, was not to be the

sole preserve of the State Opera; the Australian Opera's contribution to the Festival was Scarlatti's monumentally unimpeachable *Tramonti di Honor* which I regret to say I recommended for performance by the Australian Opera Studio in an dying days. Harking back to that remarkable English Opera Group season eight years earlier, one was reminded that while the circumstances of the Bonython Hall had not noticeably improved, the quality of the presentation in that year had declined. Interestingly, on that point, the next and indeed most recent success operatically of the Festival was a return to Benjamin Britten with *Death in Venice*, which proved a tour-de-force in every aspect of the art form. Rarely in Australia have we seen the elements of production come so blindingly well together as on that occasion. The defined nuances of Friedman's musical direction together with Jim Sharman's glacial production and Robert Gard's impeccable reading of Von Aschenbach combined to score a major triumph for Australian opera sensually and the forces assembled in

Adelaide, in particular. It was a delight to see the long overdue recognition of Mr Gard, as an exponent of this music certainly second to none in this country, and in the light of the forthcoming film of the opera possibly a force to be reckoned with internationally.

Inevitably, some of these observations on the Adelaide Festival over the years reflect the writer's personal involvement in the events. Moreover, the productions and the artists mentioned by no means compose an exhaustive account even of the official programme over that period. But even this brief account indicates the nobility and diversity which has been made available to Australian audiences through the Festival, or, indeed, most of which could never have happened but for the presence of the Festival itself and the unparalleled enthusiasm for the arts which it engenders every two years.

Long may they reign!

(The writer wishes to thank Judy Davis of Flinders University for assistance in researching this material.)

OPERA -REVIEWS



Myer Friedman (left) and Thomas Johnstone (right) in Tappett's *A Midsummer Marriage*

Good comparisons

by Ken Healey

Apart from Canberra Opera's *Ande*, November marked the end of the operatic year. It proved to be a month variable for making comparisons. In Adelaide, the State Opera of South Australia was making history with the second-ever production of *A Christmas Carol* in the presence of Scots composer Thos Magerath. At the same time in Melbourne, the Australian Opera had a variety of productions on display as the Princess the smash all-Czech production of Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*, Bellini's *Norma* in its first resurrection without Joan Sutherland, for whom it was originally rehearsed, and last, but hardly least, the company's most successful warhorse, John Copley's wonderfully funny and stylish production of *The Marriage of Figaro*, with a number of cast changes.

None of the four productions was

disappointing, given reasonable expectations. For instance, *The Starved Sailor* sung in English, was shown up for the old-fashioned but timeless piece that it is. By the time it arrived in Melbourne, the production had begun to recover from the scorching heat of the Czech party hack Premysl Kocin who had shamefully won the trip to Sydney for the October opening rather on political than on artistic grounds.

None, a little longer in the repertoire, but also treated as its first appearance by stage producers, is now officially entrusted to our hands, those of Christopher Reinshaw. But it remains a two-woman opera, and all men were used to judge the efforts of Rita Hunter and Rosemary Green who took over the roles created by Sutherland and Margot Eikon. *Figaro*, as I had indicated above, was also mostly of interest because of changes in casting.

The positive impact of *A Christmas Carol* in Adelaide is some indication of how well the state company is doing in South Australia. A contemporary opera was playing to full houses. *Doktor M*, of course, a strong selling point, but for my money he is the major drawback to this opera. The miserable, non-Christian, Christmas sentimentality of the story hardly stands up to serious musical and dramatic treatment, which is certainly what it got from Magrath and producer Robin Lovejoy.

With names like Elsom and Jacob, the crossable business partners Scrooge and Marley may, for all I can tell, have been Jews, and therefore hardly required to become Christmas. Be that as it may, James Christensen did dominate the production as the most unforgettable Scrooge one is likely to see as any realisation of the story, that all humans not immersed in cynicism went out to him. As a performer, Christensen has disappointed me to be less suited to straightforward, almost soundtracking characterisation. Here his subtlety was a new departure.

There were fine performances, as expected, from Thomas Edmunds (Bob Cratchit) and a couple of carolers, Judith Huxley as Belle Petrovsky and three tiny roles, and a male *Doppelgänger* as the Spirit of Christmas Past. Allowed to move in the first act unaccompanied by the costumes which nullified his later manipulations, Green was superb. Kater Lattar so accented the admittedly high tenor of Fair that she would surely have scared the young Scrooge out of his wits. The son of Tom Langwood intelligently suggested all but the final scenes, when what was needed was a big enough budget to depart from the all-purpose inside-outside which had served so admirably to that point.

Doni Vaughan and a couple of dozen members of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra introduced us to a through-



James Christensen as the Scrooge

composed score, which impressed me less than the same composer's *Mary Queen of Scots*, based in London in 1980, but which proved to be both sagable and genuinely modern in opera terms.

In fact I could go on listing other vignettes of this Adelaide production, especially cast members such as David Bréna, Roger Howall, and actor Helen Hodgkinson. The point is that none of these artists is less accomplished than those who performed the same weight of role for the national company in Melbourne during the same month. Should the conclusion be drawn that the best regional companies (Victoria's *Don Pasquale* and *Past* might just as validly have been put forward for comparison) have now drawn level with the Australian Opera in terms of what one might see and hear on any single night?

The question is carefully phrased. No regional company would now or in the foreseeable future expect to be able to play within 24 hours the three operas that I saw in Melbourne from the AD. But, given the organization of a same singer like Rita Hunter, both Victoria and South Australia showed during 1981 that they can compete

with any one of the four average-quality standard nights of the AD.

I want to pose some potentially embarrassing questions, rather than to offer answers. This month Doni McElbourne went to have all its opera in a concentrated dose? Is the AD serving Australia well by using an offshoot such as Judith Sahlin, a captivating *Norman*, and employing in the chorus a Christene as disarmingly terrified as Bernadette Cullen, not to mention the other three or four characters with solo roles in *Figaro*? Most of these singers did well, but they are much closer to the standard we have come to associate with regional companies than with the national flagship.

Among the visitors to the national company, Gloria Foxley was a bewitching *Marianka* in *The Starved Sailor*. Rita Hunter (unexpectably) had her finest moment as Norma in the big duet with Adalgisa, which she and Rosemary Green sang with exquisite restraint, going to music and the drama a new dimension. And Marilyn Richardson was beautiful to see and hear as *Figaro's* Countess.

The inescapable question is, is the enormous expense of keeping the Australian Opera in its present form justified by the comparative standard of production which we saw from it and the best regional companies in 1981?

I certainly enjoyed, say, *Don Pasquale* *Past* and *A Christmas Carol* as a totality more than the three operas under review from the AD in Melbourne. How much are we really paying for the occasional incomparable masterpiece of music setting and staging which the AD still occasionally produces?

Judged by the standards of good regional opera, all three AD Melbourne productions in November were acceptable. Is that what we should expect? Is that what we should get? I hope that supporters of the state companies in Melbourne and Adelaide realize how quickly they have become truly excellent of their type.

Aida — eventually small was beautiful

by Ken Healey

Canberra Opera's *Aida*, performed twice at the National Indoor Sports Centre and the subject of an ABC magazine on December 12, was a triumph of smallness in quantity. The proportions of the 4000-seat stadium were so perfectly matched by Peter Cooke's Egyptian tomb of a set that it came at a low price when guest host Donald Smeets appeared as a dramatic figure in Memphis to sing the opera's opening phrase

in Bernd Breithank's production.

Looking tiny in gargantuan surroundings is not in itself a virtue, even in opera. After a period in which it sounded as though all the principals would have been better served by direct microphones than by singing muffled in the vast space, the truth of the "small is beautiful" axiom was heard towards the end of the first act when only the men's and then the women's chorus sang.

In an acoustic where no sound bounces back to burnish vocal and orchestral tone or to impart physical thrill to an audience, even the use of a complex musical score became magically audible. After tuning one's ears to the general level of sound it was possible to hear soft singing, especially in the chorus of prisoners, as never before.

Thereafter we were listening to beautiful, emotion-laden music in an intricate setting sufficiently sinking to enhance the impact of the living sound. None of this effect was captured by the television cameras during the triumphal scene at the second performance. They concentrated on a sequence of close shots.

The usual figure on whom most glory rested was conductor Carlo Felice Cifarelli. There is little point in being able to hear every line of concerned music if rhythm, intonation, entries and cut-offs are in any way approximate. They were all precise, wonderfully so considering the pre-war nature of the maestro's forces, both in the orchestra and on stage. The cast of 400, concentrating relentlessly throughout the customary events of their lives, were led at once clearly and respectfully.

The true Lulliputian which gave structure to every scene but the physical was Canberra Opera itself. Built around a full-time salaried staff of only three, the less than imperial company receives a government subsidy of about \$7000 a year, a tiny fraction of it coming from the Australia Council's Music Board, the bulk from the Department of Capital Territory. Logistical mistakes were worked, through the integration of three local choirs, a school cadet corps, the highly professional Human Vroom Dance company, and of course, the livestock.

Tener Angelo Mariani claims to be unique in actually riding the elephant in the triumphal scene. His courage was rewarded by the fact that his elongated features and clear voice took the listeners in the second The Aida, Larriane Nawa Jones, revealed a beautiful lyric sound, superior in its high, hushed notes. The others, Margitta Elkan, Donald Sharkey, John Shaw and Bryan Dewling made an excellent team; there are no stronger voices available for their roles. But the first-clashing intensity of the long and important scenes involving only two or three principals was never going to carry throughout a stadium as large as a football field. It was a significant, but not an admirable price to pay for the spectacle.



John Shaw and Donald Sharkey in Canberra Opera's Aida

OPERA GUIDE

NSW

THE AUSTRALIAN OPERA (20088)

Opera Theatre, SOH. *The Mortared Bride* by Smetana (in English), conductor, Geoffrey Arnold, producer, Premysl Koc, designer, Sárka Baya Sebedkova, choreographer, Astida Starova, with Glorvyn Fowler, Ron Stevens, Gwynne Ewer and Donald Sharkey. This disappointing rendition of the Czech favourite has been largely revamped for the summer season with happier results. Feb 4, 11. *Madame Butterfly* by Puccini, conductors, Stuart Challender and David Kram, producer, John Copley, designers, Henry Eardon and Michael Stennett, with Rhonda Bruce, Joan Gaden, Lynne Carlton, Kathleen Moore, Jennifer Birmingham, Anson Austin, Jon Sydney, Sergei Baggikin, Lamberto Furlan, John Pringle and Gregory Yurash. Copley's highly successful production at a mere sliver of the AO's repertoire and features a series of the company's leading house talent. Feb 6, 9, 12, 15, 25. *Comedies of Three Centuries*. Appear by William Shield (English); conductor, Richard Borynaga,

producer, Christopher Renshaw, designer, Kenneth Rowell. *The Bear* by William Walton (English), conductor, David Kram, producer, Robin Lovejoy, designer, Tom Lingwood and its re-tell by Jacques Offenbach (French/English/Italian/"nonsense"), conductor, Richard Borynaga, producer, Christopher Renshaw, designer, Kenneth Rowell. Robin Lovejoy's exquisite production of *The Bear* featuring Heather Begg's marvellous performance as Popova will be joined by two repertoire concertos, Shield's *Flower* premiere in 1982 and Offenbach's knockabout one-act *Re-to-ster*. Feb 2, 5, 8, 13, 16, 20, 27.

L'estrade. Borge by Donizetti, conductor, Richard Borynaga, producer, George Ogilvie, designer, Kristian Fradrikson, with Joan Sutherland, Bernadette Guillen, Lamberto Furlan, Bruce Martin and Robert Alimen. Feb 3, 6, 10, 13, 17, 20, 23, 26. *Mormo* by Bellini, conductor, Richard Borynaga, producer, Christopher Renshaw, designer, Forella Miran, with Rita Hunter, Rosemary Gurn, Anson Austin and Clifford Grant. Feb 24, 27.

FILM FOR BELL

John Bell, artistic director and star turn of Sydney's *Narrated Theatre*, is enjoying his first major film role as the journalist, husband to Helen Mirra, in John Duigan's new film *Far East*. Bryan Brown plays a former Vietnam warrior with a night club in a south east Asian city. Location filming, Macau.

FAMOUS FIRST DRAFTS

One famous book and one famous play are on a first draft funding list of AFC — *Close Straps for Nothing* by George Johnston (script) in a way, to *My Brother Jack* and *The Election of Benjamin Franklin* by Steve Spear. Gordon Chuter took it around Australia, to London and off-Broadway. Will he return for the film?

LEE GORDON FILM

Talking of funding, Steve MacLean of *Starworks* got a first draft funding of \$6,500 for a feature to be called *The Lee Gordon Story*. Gordon was the remarkable American entrepreneur who presented shows at the now demolished Stadium in Rushcutters Bay, Sydney. What he made on rock and roll and concerts he lost on jazz, and died broke a few years ago.

VOSS ON SCREEN BY NOLAN

Voss lives again. The famed painter Sydney Nolan is producing a film of that name based on the novel by Patrick White, with Stuart Cooper, a Canadian, directing.



John Bell



Gordon Chuter in *The Election of Benjamin Franklin* — script review

Harry M Miller once had the rights, at which time Wheat held a veto over the choice of director. Joseph Losey was once to direct. Four with a script by the late David Mercer, but nobody could raise the money. Cooper made a television/German documentary on Nolan in Australia.

GOLDA FILM TO TV

The film about Golda Meir, with Judy Davis as the young Golda, to Ingrid Bergman's mature prime minister (and Jack Thompson as one of the men in her life), is now to be a television mini-series of four one-hour episodes created by *Woman Called Golda*. Two of the principal characters in the script have just died — Sadat and Moshe Dayan. Joss Fower, who was playing Sadat, quit the job when the Egyptian president was killed.

JAMES MASON'S OZ BENEFIT

James Mason contested the occasion when Joan Sutherland sang at a Covent Garden benefit for Australian performers in London who have found the going tough. A London newspaper considerably explained it was because he has an Australian wife, but failed to name her — the actress Cloris Kay.

NEW PROMO MANAGER FOR HOYTS

Nigel Laundry, with a background in publicity and administration in publishing

and travel, and lately with United Artists, has been appointed publicity and promotions manager for Hoyts. Hoyts Australia releases this year will include *The Man From Snowy River* and *Australia*.

COLONIAL HOUSE (WITH POOL) WANTED.

"Interested persons" is the Eastern Suburbs have been asked to let the producers of *The Year of Longing* know if they have available "an impressive and beautiful colonial house with drive, courtyard and gates, suitable for consideration as an embassy, set in tropical surroundings" and "a large swimming pool" in ditto surroundings.

SYDNEY UNI FILM CONNECTION

An attempt to revive the Sydney University film connection is being made by the University's Filmmakers Society which has re-named Union Theatre, now the Footlock Theatre. The first effort was a season of local shows such as *Reflexions* by James Backson, *One Hundred a Day* by Gillian Armstrong, *Flanagan* by Peter Campbell, *Centre and Puller* by Philip Meyer, *Morris Lower Ark* by Ross Hoffman, *Boys and Butter* by Peter Kingston — more than 70 films in all. This program was laid on for the Sydney Festival, but we certainly hope that it is only the beginning of cinema's new University life.

Angela Punch Mc Gregor



by Elisabeth Riddell

What does the gothic drab of *The Chant of Anne's Blacksmith*, the tight-lipped wife of *Newsfront*, the witch of *The Blind* have to do with red-cliffed, contrived advertising model in *The Best of Friends*?

"Well, I'm a character actress," Angela Punch McGregor says, "and they're all characters. Certainly Melanie in *The Best of Friends* is a complete change of pace for me. All those clothes, for one thing. It was partly the change of pace that attracted me. I think the script is very funny and accurate."

Angela Punch McGregor — it would have been said a few years ago that there was a name that was too long for any cinema marquee, but the wonders of electronic development have changed all that — lives in a house that is quite hard to find in a leafy northern (but not North Shore, as she points out) suburb of Sydney. It has all-round verandas and is overlooked by apartment blocks of mediocre design, but they are far enough away not to be a worry. Landscapers sweep by the kitchen window as she pours tea for me while her husband consults with a builder about renovations. He is Ross McGregor, and her agent and manager. Between them they are Nardosya Productions Ltd. It seems to be a nice, loosely-organised arrangement.

Angela does not long for independence, except of spirit. "I haven't here," she says. "I get homesick (I have to go to Manly). When I was working up at Mataranka on *We of the Never Never* I had all sorts of things from here around me. I took some paintings and curtains and a bedspread and cushions and a video cassette and set up house. Some of us lived in fibroshacks, and in caravans and so on. In great contrast to me, Arthur Dignam, who plays Mr. Gunn to my Mrs. Gunn, arrived with a couple of T-shirts, a change of clothing and a bag of books and I don't think even noticed the surroundings, which were pretty awful."

We of the Never Never, produced by Adams Packer, directed by Igor Auzan, written by Peter Schock and

photographed by Gary Harvey, will be released in March.

From the domestic peace of her suburban kitchen, Angela looks back to filming at Matarinka Station with affectionate amusement, now that it is safely over and the picture into post production.

"We were on location for three months, which is a long shoot, especially if you are stuck out in the Territory where it's hot and isolated, and the catering is, to say the least, of limited interest. People are inclined to get a bit frayed at the edges in such circumstances. But I can say this — all of us, every one of us, believed absolutely in the film and what we were doing."

Angela Parach went to Kintoppal, a convent school run by the Order of the Sacred Heart (the school itself is now demolished and the Kintoppal now established as part of the big Rose Bay Convent). She was a somewhat strident

student — her words — and refused to quit school on being accepted for NIDA. She graduated in 1974 along with, among others, Andrew MacFarlane, Ingrid Mason and Elizabeth Alexander.

"The competition for NIDA is much fiercer now," she says. "I met John Clark, the director, the other day and he said, 'Oh, you'd never get into NIDA now.' I hope he was joking."

"I had no work for a few months. It was just amazing because there I was, so fit, so saturated with everything to do with acting, and no work. Then I was spotted by Ray Gerslitz, a director who is now in Perth, and he cast me as Pippin in *The Playboys of the Western World*. I learned the part in 24 hours."

"I did a lot of stage work, in Sydney, Melbourne and Tasmania and then I thought I had better take off for London. Everybody was going. So I did a few well-paid soapies and packed my bags."

"I went to plays every night and

enrolled at the Academy of Music and Dramatic. But it didn't work. The tourist pleasures were great, but I wondered — what was I doing there? Trying to make it on the English stage? I wanted to make a career in Australia. I felt it would be artificial of me to try to work in England. So I came back, in spite of having paid over all that lovely money in fees to the Academy."

"My first film was *Amicus*. It wasn't a great piece of luck, because I had Fred Schepisi as director. I hate him for not being here, but in America, although I understand his reasons. The film was totally underestimated and misunderstood, by critics and public." She won the AFI award for Best Supporting Actress in *Blacksmith* and Best Actress in *Newfound*, in the same year.

"In fact I have been lucky in all my directions. I have to trust them. I still do a lot of things wrong. I am learning that the less you do, in the acting sense, the better. When I first saw Michael Caine, when I was doing *The Island*, I thought, well, what's so good about that style? But I found out. In other words, less is better. It is what goes on inside the head that the camera picks up."

"Michael Ritchie was the director and as well as Michael Caine for me in watch there was Patrick Middelton and David Warner. *The Island* made me *Amicus* — Ritchie chose it because it was the least fashionable of the Caribbean islands — was physically very taxing. It would have done better there and overseas except for the R rating, not for sex but for violence."

Angela has learned the hard way to include certain conditions in her contracts. Referring to the dowdy, personality-reducing wardrobe worn by one of her costars in a recent film she says, "In my contracts now I have the decision on wardrobe, hairdressing, accommodation, even transport and air-conditioning. It takes courage to argue with a producer about these things, and you might get a reputation for being difficult, but it pays off."

Since finishing *We of the Never* she has read a dozen scripts and turned them all down. "It hurts a bit, because I love to work. But I will be starting on another film soon, and in the meantime there is this house to enjoy."



Angela Parach McLeary with George Blumenthal in *The Red of Fingers*

Mad Max II — sound and fury

by Elizabeth Riddell

Mad Max II is Australia's latest contribution to the hot-metal genre of filmmaking and I do not doubt its overseas success not only in Australia but in America and Japan and in certain other parts of the world which otherwise recognise us only by our tourist t-shirts. It may also result in the extensive re-screening of the original *Mad Max* which was but a pale portrait of number two.

The two talent points of the film are first the sound, courtesy of Brian May (who would have thought he had it in him?) and assorted sound masters and above all the Dolby system, which brings the deathfalls associated with colliding diesel trucks right into your eardrums, from which it will take an ear, nose and throat doctor to extract them; the will thereby earn himself another half of a Mercurio and second the violence.

The violence is surreal, contrived, impossible to believe and comparatively free of blood. There are one or two appalling sudden deaths but before you have time to blanch the camera is off picking up an another as punk gear flying off his bike into the gravel wash of Broken Hill, where much of the film was made.

Being one of those who doesn't care what happens to people as long as a movie is not flat, I was upset by the death of Max's dogged, handsome blue cattle dog. But it was all over in a moment. The intention by the producer was plain but the audience did not actually see the arrow on target, and the only sound was an astonished squeak. The dog's death also comes right at the end of the film, so that feelings are not too much harrowed.

Apart from the talented dog the best performances come from Elma Minty (a small boy) known as the Feral Child (he does clever things with amber booming) and Mel Gibson who gives a cool, breeding rendition of Max.

Crucio who begins to take Gibson seriously after he works as Frank in *Gettysburg* won't find much to attract them in this film, but they can look forward to *The Year of Living Dangerously*.

It would be useless to outline the plot. A narrator with an uninteresting delivery opens proceedings by saying that two warring tribes have wrecked our world, leaving only a few survivors. This then takes a terrible beating in the course of the



Mel Gibson as 'Mad Max'.

film — you could drive a horse and cart, if such a prosaic vehicle were around — through the holes in the script but who cares? The film is a master of wild imagination stimulated into action over wilder. Their acts look impossible, but they come before our very eyes. When dialogue has to be inserted between stunts, as sometimes happens, disaster sets in. The lines are so banal they induced bouts of laughter in the audience. Mike Prestons gets

the worst lines, and does his worst with them.

Among those taking part in this cinematic experience are, apart from Gibson, Preston and Minty, Bruce Spence as a dirty gyro pilot, Max Pappas as Toadie, Virginia Hey as Warner Woman and Arkie Whitley as a maid.

After the final battle between the family-goodies and the twofly-baddies some of the leftover set off for Moona Moona,

having found an old brochure full of promises of sun, sunscreens and peace.

The film has more than 100 scenes in the production and crew credits. For instance, seven stuntmen under a stunt coordinator, six special effects persons, 12 trucks, bikes and car mechanics, a construction team of four and two welders.

Kennedy Miller Entertainment produced, with George Miller as director and distribution except in the US, Canada and Norway by Warner Brothers.

The Best of Friends — Nothing Subtle

by Elizabeth Riddell

There is nothing subtle about *The Best of Friends*. It aims to amuse at a local level, sometimes above the neck, sometimes above the neck, and it sometimes does. Its source would be the Glenda Jackson-George Segal comedies that began with *A Touch of Class*, with a nod in the direction of *Not About a Boy*. For Australian the category is romantic comedy, with optimism.

Angela Pouch McGeerrie and Graeme Blundell are cast as Melane and Tom. Melane does commercials for television and Tom is a well-regarded teacher accountant, devoted to his job and the occasional long lunch. They have been friends since school days. He has been the recipient of her confidence about men loved and lost, he himself has played the field.

At a dinner held to celebrate their 30 years of friendship Melane and Tom decide they "ought as well" seeing each a temporarily out of steady company, and they do. The next morning Melane who has a hangover, is embarrassed, but Tom thinks it might be nice to carry on the good work. To save friends, they decide, they had better forget the call on the day.

But Melane finds the pregnant Tom is pleased and wants to marry her. She does not want to marry him. They compromise: Tom moves into Melane's apartment, with his car. Melane is a telephone, if that's the word, and contacts lay over at a week of its tail. The ill-assorted pair their friendship in nature, their love affair going bad, agree under pressure from relatives, friends, business acquaintances etc to get married. Six months gone, as people used to say, Melane agrees to marry Tom but leaves him at the altar before the vows are exchanged, colluding with what appear to be genuine labour pains.

And so it goes. Miserable again, quarrelsome when together, Tom and Melane struggle on through the script's contrived and predictable situations earning only perfunctory laughs.

Their step-and-go love affair is both interrupted and assisted by Ruth Cracknell, Henry Sleep, Graham House (as a libelated Catholic priest) Serge Tails. There is an embarrassing appearance, a temporary visitor for Melane, of Mark Lee of *Quibb*. The show concludes, unimpassioned laughs from the audience.

The performers do their best but it is not enough. Once again, it must be asked — is comedy really Australia's thing? Perhaps we should leave it to the Americans and the English or, better still, the French.

The Best of Friends from The Friendly Film Company and the NSW Film Corporation, was produced by Tom Jeffrey, written by Donald Macdonald (actor and novel sketch writer) directed by Michael Robertson and is distributed by Hoyts.

Puberty Blues a lot going for it

by Elizabeth Riddell

How beautiful is the untainted female youth of Australia, until it opens its mouth. That was my first (and only) reaction to *Puberty Blues* which is alleged by some to be a sensitive study of schoolgirls and schoolboys (and one youth partially employed with panel van, busky shop at weekend at play and Sydney suburb, near beach, south west of the metropolis).

The truth with *Puberty Blues* would be to have your personal watch attached to your cinema seat, so that you could eliminate positively all the sound. Just as, say, the viewer can avoid the banal and mangled syntax of the cricket and mean com-

mentaries by turning a knob — one of the last freedoms.

It would be nice to get the sound from *Blues* and just watch the kids lurching through their adolescence (the film) minus their push patterns. The relief of not having to hear one more "dead act", a comedian that seems to fit all circumstances, now adorably from the lips of the movie because would be considerable.

What the boys may scarcely matter. They are not given to much chat, being more the grunting type, and in any case the mass of casual hamburgers that hangs around them — despite the hours they spend on surf boards, partially submerged in the ocean waves — indicates that whatever they read would not be appetising.

However, *Puberty Blues* has a lot going for it. Joan Long's production is lively. Margaret Kelly's script skilfully knits together what is basically a string of episodes and moods. Don McAlpine's cinematography is beguiling (show the camera fingers on those lovely cut of uniform legs and arms, not to mention tops and bottoms) and the perspective, amused, detached, but once or twice true and repetitive, direction by Bruce Beresford (who will clearly try anything) and the personality and performance of Nell Schofield.

Kathy Lette and Catherine Carey, known as the Salmon Sisters, wrote the film's book of the same name when their school experiences were still raw in their minds, and had it published in 1979, when it took off rather unarrested. Things may have changed since then. "Dead air" may not now be the only means of communication. But I assume that the girls and boys of the world still have a life style that suits them, and that will endure.

The principals of *Blues* are Debbie and Sue, high school girls, and Debbie's



The sea life girls in *Full Beach* on 1 (left) Nell Schofield second from left in *Puberty Blues*

FILM & GUIDE

sequential boy friends. Bruce and Garry (debuted as played by Neil Schofield, Sue by Jodi (pronounced Yadi) Capelin, Bruce by Jay Harkiss (who may have been watching too much Heggen) and Garry by Geoff Roper.

For once the theme is on the real concerns of the female adolescent, rather than the male. The girls cheat at ensure life to their parents' work, talk of nothing but other girls, clothes and boys, the big question being whether to "give in" to the backseat of cars at drive-ins, or stay at home on Saturday nights. No point in pursuing the result of the pondering.

Debbie "gives in" to Garry after an unsatisfactory attempt with Bruce, and fears the in pregnancy. The pregnancy sub-plot is especially well managed by Bennett and Schofield.

The real interest for an outsider is in the or place, are the rules of surf behaviour, an anthropological curiosity that would have interested Margaret Mead. By the time the girls go to the beach on weekend mornings the boys are already almost out of sight, on their heads. Once the girls are settled on the sand they are expected to watch every move of the boys and praise the performance when the boys take a break ashore — "You weren't watching, you didn't see me!" observed by "I was, I did". The boys relax on the sand while the girls also order for food, get the money from their purses and go to buy it. When they return they hand the stuff to the boys, who complain about it, the girls themselves eat nothing. This subsequence translates from the beach to every aspect of their relationship. Such much, of course, set the standard for the behaviour of the mature, if that is the word. Australian rule. This is where it all begins. The crucial parts, and if you don't want to know about it go to the film anyway for the scenes mentioned earlier.

There are interesting points of resemblance between Michael Thornhill's much gloomier and less professional *23 Holden* and between an entertaining California film *The Little Father* Neil Schofield at 17 is a tough too old for scenes in which she wrestles with another girl on the floor of the school bus, is caught cheating, and talks cheekily with her parents. But the films have such a splendid presence, such looks and spirit to the role that it does not matter.

The older concerned are Randy Moran, Alan Cassell, Rossella Wallace to nice portrayal and Charles Trappard, who as the school principal, God help him. The boy you would least like to have anything to do with is called Scratch, played by Neil Lander.

The Split Screen song "I Hope I Never", is the best of three sung by Sharon O'Neill. *Forever* was funded privately and by the AFC. Amalgamated Television and Patberg, and is distributed by Roadshow.

WATCH FOR THESE

TIME BANDITS is a good joke. Monty Python featured, about some dwarfs, gnomes or leprechauns who band together as the most inefficient gang of international robbers ever to blunder their way to the acquisition of untold riches. Essential to approach it with a relaxed mind.



John Gargulian and Robert Duval in *True Confessions*.

PRIEST OF LOVE is about the writer D H Lawrence, and comes from Britain with a few outrageous scenes: which, it is said, are all torn down from the real thing, gleaned from diaries. With Ian McKellen, Janet Suzman, Penelope Keith. It may have been nominated for an Oscar by the time you read this.



Ian McKellen in *Priest of Love*.

THE GREAT MUPPET CAPER stars Miss Piggy, of whom some of us are getting a bit tired (but not tired enough to stay away) and the company and has a plus in the presence of John Cleese, Doree Rigg, Robert Morley and Charles Grodin.

THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S

WOMAN is a stunning visual experience, meaning it's great to watch though you may not care in the end what happens to the characters. In any case, read the book by John Fowles.

MAD MAX 3 — well, more of the same. Mad Max 1 has grossed more than \$100 million at the box office, returning a great chunk of money to the distributors, Roadshow, and entertaining a lot of people. In the second helping, Mel Gibson rides again.

TRUE CONFESSIONS, from the book of the same name by John Gregory Dunne, with Robert de Niro and Robert Duval as Los Angeles brothers: priest and cop, the one urgently pushing for power in the church, the other doggedly and sometimes malevolently pursuing criminals, is a must. Joan Dalton, Duval's wife, had a hand in the script which maybe softens up just a little towards the end.

ARTHUR teams Dudley Moore and John Gargulian as a rich silly employer and an impeccable gentleman's gentleman. It is full of good one-liners and magnificently funny scenes and offers Liza Minnelli, in what is almost a supporting role.



Dudley Moore and Liza Minnelli in *Arthur*.

THE FIANCÉE is the film that was voted most popular at the 1981 Sydney Film Festival and therefore heads the list for the Festival tour to country centres in NSW after a ceremonial season. In German with English subtitles, it tells the extraordinary and extraordinarily moving, true story, in fictional form of Eva Lippsold's imprisonment for radical activities in pre-war Nazi Germany. Eva was the fiancée, who during her 10 years in jail kept her love alive, with few meetings. The last time she sees him, he is also in prison.

DEMOCRACY FOR DANCERS

In light of the AB dancers' demands, it is interesting to hear about the democratic running of ballet companies in Scandinavia from Terry Green, an Australian dancer who has worked there for 15 years, the last decade as a member of the Norwegian National Ballet. The details apply to the company, but are generally applicable in that they follow the worker-participation example of industrial companies in that part of the world.

Dancers have a say in the choice of dancers joining the company and select an overall list of recommendations for the repertoire. They don't get involved in casting, but if they feel a dancer is being unduly passed by, they will offer to go with that dancer to the director to ask why. In recent years, the dancers' opinion has influenced the selection of artistic staff.

The dancers elect three formal representatives once a year by secret ballot. Two of them — one from soloists ranks, the other from the corps — will be members of the workmen's party with the company's reputation, ballet master and director. The fact that they are counterbalanced by the staff means they can have their say without dominating the decision — yet the staff doesn't often go against the dancers' opinion, according to Green.

He has found it a healthy involvement, though he says you have to be alert to possible dangers. "You have to watch people, and even yourself, to make sure that mechanism isn't being used to help anyone's career. Or you might find yourself making decisions automatically, without asking others' opinions, and that is the one you should move aside and let someone act as the dancers' representative."

There is always an artist on the board of management, and the dancers are also involved in general wage decisions. The performers may nominate whom they like to sit in a Unhappily Married at the conference table, with the management opposite and the State representatives in between.

"This system of participation works most of the time," says Green. "Sometimes you might get in a director who is an effective person, but who cannot adjust to it. It is also difficult if the dancers are tired, when they have heavy responsibilities on stage. It is hard to get them to come to a meeting and keep awake for four hours. But it does involve for you to stand up and speak to members of parliament about things you care about."

Having been a member of the company for 10 years, he receives a pension of 15 percent of his highest salary in that time. Dancers who have served 20 years get 44 per cent. In each case, 40 percent of that sum is knocked off as soon as the retired dancer goes into a full-time job.

In the meantime, it enables the dancer to contemplate a new career. Green has already established himself as a teacher in Norway, and came back to Australia to check out the scene during the summer. He doesn't know yet whether his future will be here or there — or both.

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF DANCE

The world's first multi-volume reference work on dance is being prepared for publication in America. Called *The International Encyclopedia of Dance*, it will be published by Charles Scribner's Sons in 1984.

The four volumes, plus an index volume, are being edited by Selma Janine Cohen, former editor of the dance scholarship publication *Dance Perspectives*. Her panel of associate editors includes dance critics, scholars, a teacher, a dancer and an anthropologist who is also a Laban analyst and Dance Research Coordinator at New York University's Department of Performance Studies.

A synopsis of the encyclopedia's contents promises it will cover Western theatrical dance, theatrical dance of the non-Western world, ritual and recreational dance. Entries, arranged alphabetically, will range from brief definitions to essays on historical subjects and thematic motifs. The reference list will include bibliographies and non-book sources such as films, recordings and related items.

VARIETY IS THE SPICE...

Sydney dance-goers certainly can't complain about variety. This year, the Australian Ballet's piece de resistance will be the addition of *The Nutcracker* to its repertoire, with the production by Soviet Bolshoi dancers Leonid Korovin and Valentina Karlova. Meanwhile, Graeme Murphy has dreamed up an extraordinary event for the Sydney Dance Company next month, in which actors and musicians will work with his scores of dancers in an experimental collaboration to follow the company's formal concert in the Drama Theatre and the Opera Theatre of the Sydney Opera House.

AUSTRALIAN BALLET — A SECOND CHANCE

The Australian Ballet is starting 1982 with its complement of performers hardly disturbed by the 25-day dancers' strike late last year. Most who have left — Gary Noyman, David Birch, Ken Whitmore and Joseph Jagannath, for example — had declared their intentions before the strike.

Kelvin Cox is the major loss. He was chief spokesman for the dancers on strike, and by the time they voted 28-19 to return to work, he had decided he could not continue his long career with the company.

Two other leading dancers, Dale Baker and Joanne Michel, were considering offers from American companies. Although they decided to stay with the Australian Ballet, both offers held for later in 1982 should they find that the AB management's new proposals don't take effect.

Most importantly for Australia, the idea of forming another classical ballet company in this country has not been shelved. It is being vigorously pursued by Kelvin Cox, who is finding a great deal of support in artistic quarters and growing interest on the financial side.

Initially, when the plan was mooted, almost all the dancers were determined to stay firm against the AB management as a unit. They were, in fact, a company which could have rehearsed an evening of ballet and presented it with the help of an entrepreneur like Michael Edgley, who had declined his support for the project.

But then the AB Board offered a 23-point peace plan which included a new person on the board for someone elected by the dancers, more rehearsal time, the employment of a physiotherapist, more dancers, dancer involvement in the choice of service staff appointments, a management consultant firm's examination to guide restructuring of the company and, most importantly, the removal of administrative Peter Robert's influence from the artistic area.

Once the majority of dancers had accepted it, even those who doubt the changes will work in practice decided to at least give them a go. As the company's Equity representative, Paul de Munroe, puts it: "After all that we have fought for, I feel that people should try to prove to the public that we were fighting for a cause, and to make sure for the sake of future dancers that the promises are carried out."

POTENT DANCE THEATRE

Pina Bausch and the Wuppertal Dance Theatre

by Bill Shoobridge

Jane Sherman clearly believes strongly in Pina Bausch and her Wuppertal Dance Theatre, so do the German and French theatre critics, yet when Sherman announced it as the "greatest and most exciting theatre company today", many people were bewildered. This is symptomatic of nothing else but the fact that many Australian arts practitioners and audiences categorise unduly, as if dance were not a branch of theatre.

Bank of course, but I'm sure that many "legit" theatre fans will not even consider going to see Pina Bausch. Sad when one considers the integration of "word" and "gesture" in Taddeo Kantor's *Chest 2*, Grotowski's *Poor Theatre* or Peter Brook's *Company*.

The trouble is we haven't seen too much of this sort of integration in Australia (with the possible exception of the One Extra Dance Company amongst others) although this is changing and it will be interesting to see what comes out of the Sydney Dance Company's invited-audience only, experimental season at the Opera House in March.

One thing is certain, however, Pina Bausch's house style is stark and austere, she makes no concession to won popularity and whoever enjoys and is absorbed by her company will do so having been won over by her ideas and the power of her performers.

As a matter of fact, Bausch and her company have arrived at the integration of words and dance



Wuppertaler Tanztheater, with a *Requiem*



Requiem by Kantor and Pina Bausch

circuitously, it merely having been aided as the need arose. Bausch's initial professional dance career began as a dancer in the Metropolitan Opera (Ballet Group), relegated to appearances in the dismal diversions of ballet in 19th century operas. Knowing

the genre, it's not hard to understand her getting fed up with that.

After New York she danced with the Folkwang Ballet in Essen, later becoming its director. From there to her present position in Wuppertal can be drawn a direct line, because the



1980 Photo: UNIFEM

Folkwangbühne was created in 1929 by the greatest innovator and choreographer in German dance, Kurt Jooss.

Jooss did away with ballet "beauty" and went for hard theatricality with a powerful social conscience, just as radical in his day as Brecht. His greatest work, the anti-war *The Green Table* is still powerful and poignant today.

Pina Bausch has inherited that social conscience and the theatrical clarity, but with one difference, her obsessions are more personal, dealing almost totally with the drama of human relationships. Her material has always been chosen to give free reign to her precepts. Her first major dance creations, fully staged versions of Clark's *Orpheus* and *Fantasia* and *Agrippina* in Tannu where the singers were relegated to the pit and the works were totally danced, are highly illustrative. *Orpheus* deals with love that knows no boundaries while *Agrippina* is about a woman sacrificed to male needs.

From then it goes directly to the Brecht/Weill ballet *The Seven Deadly Sins*, *The Rose of Spring* and one of the works to be seen on the Australian tour, *Blackboard*. All of them deal with the way people (especially women) are

used, the war of the sexes and the carnalisation of human relationships.

For such convergence of vision, Bausch has sometimes been scathingly rebuked, Heint Koepler, Editor of the German dance monthly *Ballett* has said that "... (*Legend of Charity*) looks dumb and provincial, like the floundering of a spider from the backwoods who has never gone beyond puberty.... the dance content is not just the old Bausch formulae. Has no-one ever told Bausch and her lot that sex can also be fun and liberating..."

Audiences, however, no matter where the company performs, have always been deeply moved by what they've seen, condemnation and ecstatic praise ring on all sides. *Blackboard* especially has always caused the greatest excitement. Bausch wrote the opera as a psychoanalytic/symbolic journey into the nature of Love. Bausch's version is a series of scarring vignettes about sexual usurp, male/female roles and the growth and destruction of a relationship.

The seven doors of the opera become seven "rooms from a marriage" elaborated on and directed by the entire company. Properly titled

Reminiscences on hearing a taped recording of Bela Bartok's opera Duke Bluebeard's Castle the work is set in a huge deserted room dominated by a tape recorder. At one point the windows in the back of the room are opened and a great flood of dead leaves cascades into the room. The battle, it seems, is to be enacted amongst the detritus of the past, the memory of struggle. The central duo progresses by fits and starts, the man slip down and dumbly advertises their veridity, a woman's head is viciously bashed against a wall - it is indeed a harrowing work.

But Bausch is not always unerring and harsh in her outlook, although her concepts remain pure. One other work to be seen in Australia, for example, *Kastelholz* which is always performed in a dance hall, is an exercise in tenderness, experiments in tenderness, the search for it and the question of when is it not tenderness at all?

One of the most telling *Kastelholz* scenes shows a pair separated by a wide distance. Each smiles timidly at the distant partner. Briefly they take off single pieces of clothing while looking at each other, they show vulnerable "bare" spots. Across the protective space they get very close while the outward distance remains the same.

1980 is the one work that Jim Shannon wanted especially to be seen in Australia. On a bare stage covered with real surf, the dancers enact a dreamlike fantasy on the theme of childhood memories and fears, adult fears, a father who liked to dress his little girl up in her mother's clothes and so on. A real magazine provides at a birthday party at which a slowly and sadly becomes apparent that one of their number is being pointed and totally consumed. The whole enactment is recorded by video cameras and there are times when the company goes amongst the audience to dance.

This is a type of theatre that cannot be categorised and a lot of people's ideas and concepts are going to be upset, but, having seen the Company before, I have a feeling that the audiences are going to have something that will remain in their memories for a long time and be every bit as potent as previous major attractions to the Adelaide Festival have been.

DANCE -REVIEWS

The AB and The Merry Widow

by Bill Shoabridge

When the Australian Ballet finally managed to get something onto a Sydney stage last year (*The Merry Widow*) it's only truly memorable and moving thing about it was the return to the stage of Marilyn Rowe.

Whether her return is full-time, permanent or not, little with her, the AB Administration and whether or not any changes for the better in the company's structure are achieved. The management consultant firm called in to study the set-up of the company have been working and evaluating for some weeks now and are expected to give their recommendations.

Recommendations, though, are all they are, the Board are not bound to accept them, but if it (the Board) has any sense or sense-bility it will take by some of them, for the dancers are adamant that if no change is made, there will be no AB for a Board to sit on.

The Merry Widow was apparently chosen because it was the only work that had been adequately rehearsed at the time the strike was called last year, and the Board wanted desperately something to present in Sydney before the end of the year. Given the problems, it would be unreasonable to expect a top-line presentation; it was adequate and served to highlight some of the troubles that beset the Company now.

Initially *Merry Widow* was a pleasant piece of froth well contained, sprightly and lacking in any sort of heavy choreographic substance. When it first appeared it was refreshing because it was so well conceived as a story ballet, so well produced by Sir Robert Helpmann and masterfully performed by a well-trained and musically astute body of dancers. But it, more than most other ballets in the repertoire, has suffered from over-exposure. What was at first light and frothy is now serious and forced. Instead of a company that danced through it with a merry unconcern, we now have a group of dancers going through it by rote, mechanical and laden, you can almost feel their contempt and resistance these days.

It has been a money spinner for the company, if for no other reason than the fact that you'll never lose money understanding the taste of the public, but even now the public is heavily sick of it. The AB was, from my observations, hard pressed to

get anything near a suitable attendance, and talk during the intervals was full of intentions not to mount next year's subscription.

Perhaps something could have been salvaged earlier if money had been spent to bring back Sir Robert and his choreographer, Ronald Hynd, to re-work and re-dress the piece, give it some more substance and to restore the initial star, but that didn't happen.

The structure remains the same, the same set-up of scenes and characters in Act 1, the great love duet between Danilo and Hanna Glawari and those great dancing waiters as background.

Act 2 gives us the basic plot developments against backgrounds of Slavic colour, which were noticeable for their total lack of cohesion and conviction.

Of all the casts in the season the best all round pairing was that of Marilyn Rowe and Gary Norman. Rowe and Norman have always had a warm rapport on stage and Rowe is, after all, the one on whom the work was basically created.

Coming back to the work after such a long lay-off it is no wonder Rowe was hesitant and slow to start off with (the first "memory" duet) was edgy and constrained where it should have been easygoing, but as the evening progressed, she relaxed and gave the choreography more character than it has which, let's face it, isn't all that hard to do. The final scene in Manna's restaurant was dignity instead of carnie and abandoned, but here again Rowe's presence and the warmth presented between her and Gary Norman preposterous as the major elements of the story and drew all the sympathy to them.

The alternate casts of Dale Baker paired with newly promoted principal Lyndee Mann and Valeriana and Leonid Kozlov were far from satisfactory.

Dale Baker still suffers from a tendency to throw himself around the stage with a sloppy grab at bravura. He came across as insecure and lacking in authentic charm while Mann looked terrified and uncertain. She is too new to this sort of character dancing, especially with the intricate business the part calls for, and I worry about her being shoved into this sort of material before she is physically or emotionally prepared for it.

The Kozlovs are, by training and temperament, totally unsuited to the pastel delicacies of the work. Valeriana changed at it with all the intensity and human flash-glamour of a Donatella heroine, while Leonid was too wooden and deferential that

you'd never suspect there was any love between the two characters at all.

The corps de ballet tried valiantly enough to go through their allotted parts but there was no ensemble and apparently no agreement as to timing and stance. It did come across fleetingly in the first act when they swept and swirled as if flying on the wings of nervous energy.

It happened again for a while in the last act with the gas-ovens and the shifting faces of the water combs, but it could have been improved if only... look, do I have to go on like this, it's like straitjacketing the pictures in a bombed house, the Australian Ballet is a company in total disarray.

The administration and artistic direction (if it exists) stand aside from a body of dancers from whom they have no respect. The company has a managing staff which is unable to fulfill adequately its position, and it has a Board that has no direct knowledge of the conditions and circumstances that brought about last year's troubles. It has a subscription audience that demonstrably is falling off every year.

Most of the dancers involved in the strike have rejoined for this year, but even they would tell you that it is largely in the way of a stop-gap measure while they look about for jobs overseas.

Next year's subscription season is a mixed bag of mixed blessings. Sydney will finally get to see *The Blackbird* and *Swan Lake* (in the Concert Hall yet) and a long awaited new production of *The Nutcracker*.

The triple bills are a mixture of the promising and the absurd. Giles Terley's *Euphoria* and *Chloe* is probably the only workable production of that ballet (again maybe from Ashton's) which exists in the form of the Folies libretto.

Jim Kylan's *Return to the Strange Land* is a "dramatic" abstract work from that choreographer's deluding days with the Stuttgart Ballet that helped catapult him into world prominence. Robert Ray, copastor of last year's abysmal *Phantom* will make a new work to Gershwin's *Concerto in F*.

Vincenzo Nicosola, an over-the-hill choreographer of whom I have never heard will create what is described in the press release as "a graceful and romantic showstopper".

And lastly Gerald Arpaio's *Freely* will be enhanced. This is a rock ballet created for the Robert Joffrey Ballet back in the late 60's or early 70's. It was suitable enough then, in the days of Berkeley University and Kent State but now even the Joffrey has dropped it and gone on to

better things. Perhaps the AB thought it would be "big" to have it—perhaps it will and surely—perhaps it came cheap.

There were plans to mount a Stravinsky triple bill in honour of that composer's centenary this year, focusing in on Tetley's

The Fire of Spring, but this has disappeared; the Stravinsky Trust wanted payment for the performing rights (which is only reasonable) and Peter Bohren wasn't prepared to pay it, so our west Stravinsky.

This is a decision that is not defensible on

any grounds, financial or otherwise. Stravinsky is one of the truly great composers of all time and certainly the greatest creator of ballet music. The works he created in collaboration with Fokine, Nijinska and Balanchine altered the whole face of the form and any ballet company



London: Miles and Paul St. Maurice in the 18th Century William Walton Ballet's scene

that deserves the name has a duty towards him and his music.

This year, symphony orchestras, chamber groups, choirs and recitals will all celebrate his centenary, perhaps the state dance companies will too, but the Australian Ballet will not part with the cash to do so — that in itself speaks volumes.

This year's Festival of Sydney has come and gone.

There were the usual outdoor fun and sun frolics, food and drink festivals, vignettes, operas and plays — and no dance performances under the aegis of the Festival Committee — not one.

The Human Venn Dance Company from Canberra gave performances of its latest work, in the Seymour Centre Evening Theatre, totally on its own bat and funded by itself. Other than that there was nothing. The Festival Committee "promises" there will be dance next year, but that is not enough.

The official excuse given was that "the money ran out", one would like to ask why.

In the thinking behind the Festival such that they don't believe dance performances should be a part of it? There should have been money put aside to make sure there were dance groups in performance, not leave it to the last when all the foreign imports, and plays about dead conductors and so on had had their shot, and then find out that there was nothing left.

It is not enough to have outside performers at the most useless of operas etc. dance is a part of the performing arts and as such it should have had a place in the performance schedule.

Perhaps next year the Festival will remember to put aside money for it, or at least have some "official salvagers" who aren't so limited in their tastes and outlook.

The End of a Dream — inventive and original

by Janet Healey

Don Asker's new creation with the Human Venn Dance Theatre is a piece of modern day drama which is not afraid, nor ashamed, to ramrack the whole repertoire of theatrical devices to make an effect. Song and memo-making, spoken dialogue and clever costuming and properties are employed, as well as the fundamental elements of motion and stillness.

Loosely woven around the theme of the eternal triangle, the three acts of the ballet

deal with the ends of all sorts of dreams: dreams of love, of patriotism, of emotional adhesion. But the final message is one of hope. In the closing scene the dancers huddle under a makeshift shelter in a landscape of urban desolation — all the elements of modern theatre of despair are present — but the mood is optimistic. The debt to such writers as Brecht and Ibsen is obvious (sometimes too much so), but the prevailing theme is not of human isolation, but of human sharing: the seven characters share their poverty, their blankets, their fears, their laughter, their music, and above all, their dancing.

This is a company of seven individual dancers, there is no corps de ballet, and the term "prima ballerina" is inappropriate. Each dancer makes his or her contribution to the whole work in highlighting portrayals of a wide range of human emotions and situations. But it would be unjust not to mention the work of one or two of the company's women. Wendy Wallace and Cheryl Stock.

So far as the ballet has a central character, that character is Simon, and Wendy Wallace's interpretation of the role is superb. From the opening tableaux of suburban bliss to her part in the expressive dance of the consensus of debilitates in Act Three. Technique and characterisation alike are superb. Cheryl Stock, in the role of one of "The Others", is

gamine, resourceful and pliant by turns, her hinky singing in *Mezzo voce* is a high spot of the production. And to single out three two performers for especial praise is not to denigrate the other five.

Nevertheless, despite all these strengths, the production is not an unqualified success. Though the dancing and the set are dazzling to look at, the work as a whole is too episodic, one is left with the impression of a series of brilliantly executed scenes which fail by a narrow margin to add up to a coherent dramatic statement.

There is a problem too, with the use of dialogue: it sometimes works well, but at other times it is intrusive and unnecessary. It is more effective when it springs naturally from the situation and complements the central thrust of dance, and most incongruous when it labours to make an ideological or moral point. There is a dramatic illustration of the difference when a postulating screen plays the question, "How would you cope with a whole lot of people living on top of you?" Here, indeed? The question makes the point far more effectively and economically than the answer.

But these problems do not detract from the company's achievement in *The End of a Dream*. Human Venn is forging a national reputation for innovative and original choreography which creates not so much ballet as a total theatrical experience. *The End of a Dream* is a worthy addition to the repertoire.

DANCE & GUIDE

NSW

LINDSAY KEMP & COMPANY

Capital Theatre (2123453) *The Dream*, mime version of A Midsummer Night's Dream, unlikely to be like anything you've seen before and Flowers, Kemp's exotic concoction from Jean Genet. Starts Feb 23.

SYDNEY DANCE COMPANY

Drama Theatre, SDH (202888) Program of new works by Carl Morrow, André Toppel and Graeme Murphy. Starts Feb 18.

The Merry Widow. Lots of waiting to hear music. Feb 18-24.

AUSTRALIAN CONTEMPORARY DANCE COMPANY (2418462)

Incorporating the State Dance Theatre Education Unit. In schools performances. The program includes puppet versions of Giselle, The Nutcracker and Swan Lake. Feb 8-26. Evening performance of Australian Dance Works. Woodleigh Community Centre on Feb 18. Moomba performance in the Treasury Gardens. Feb 27 and 28.

VIC

THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET

Palais Theatre, St Kilda (5340661)

LINDSAY KEMP & COMPANY

Her Majesty's Theatre (8633211) *The Dream*, mime version of A Midsummer Night's Dream, unlikely to be like anything you've seen before. Feb 8-20.

MUSIC

Saint Cecilia and the holiday spirit

by Fred Blanks

There was a time, when Utopia still seemed feasible, in which musicians laid down their arms a week or two after St Cecilia's Day (which falls on November 22) and — except for the odd Messiah — were content to remain incommunicado until the beginning of March. That past music critics the chance to renew acquaintance with their families, have a holiday, and invent new adjectives ready for the next round of the fray.

Those holiday days have been gradually whittled away. At one end, every choir and musical organisation with a little head (which is often their only conspicuous asset) felt the need to present a Christmas concert, so that the sound of carols persisted right until the noise of the Yuletide turkey triumphed over it. At the other end, the operatic powers-that-be decided that they should provide a culturally stimulating alternative to surfing and cricket by organising a summer opera season. Next came the festival-mongers, who decided that what holiday needed desperately was a festival at the bottom end of the year during which people could do such things as queue up for hours across shadeless Hyde Park in order to buy some ethnic food trifle which they could have purchased for half the price with no waiting at all in their own suburbs, or go to some kind of musical society (mostly rather poorly patronised) in various venues as inspiring as the Town Hall.

The total result of all this is that music has closed the silence gap and almost turned into an annual *event* *parade* that hardly draws breath even between Christmas and New Year. No longer do critics get a holiday, some musicians or other will always find a way of performing it. No wonder critics get cantankerous.

Spot-sports may claim that the never actually named, but St Cecilia has been the undisputed patron saint of music since around 1580. Her portfolio is, in fact, a double one, for she is also patron saint of the blind. The details of her life depend on which biographer or encyclopaedia you believe.

Cecilia was a Roman of noble birth who turned towards Christianity and took a vow of celibacy, a situation which could have



A portrait of my father, John.

caused some dismay to the young Roman pagan Valerianus when Croelia's parents forced her to marry. Fortunately he also turned Christian and agreed to respect (the vow, with somewhat unexpected, indirect consequences). For the story has it that Croelia was visited secretly every night by an angel who had fallen in love with her musical skills. One night the angel, making his customary visit, was unexpectedly discovered by the husband, and — to get it on as sophisticated a level as good taste demands — the angel gave to both Croelia and her husband a crown of nardophores which he had providentially brought with him from Paradise.

Saint Cecilia, who is also reputed to have associated the organ, has inspired many musicians (such as Purcell, Handel, Spohr and Brahms), painters and authors (such as Addison, Dryden and Pope). From the late 18th century onwards, music festivals in her honour proliferated, often around her name day of November 22 — which also happens to have been the birthday of the famous English folk-song collector Cecil Sharp in 1859 and composer Benjamin Britten in 1913.

Which leads me to the performance of two appropriate works on the same day — Britten's *Mass in G* (Cecilia words by W H Auden who, like Britten, died in 1976) and Handel's setting of the Dryden ode *Alexandra's Feast* (poem 1697, music 1746). The singers were the Collegium Musicum Choir of the University of NSW conducted by Patricia Brown for Britten, Roger Cavell for Handel, and most notable features were the vocal immediacy of a choral attack and the lachrymose nature shared by soloists (soprano Gerald English, soprano Beverly Bingen and Bass Grant Dickson). A few signs of strain or a possibly pharynx were quickly averted for, so that the pious sang, intense to minor imitations, had every cause to feel honoured.

St Cecilia was not the only personage associated with the divine line of succession who was musically remembered during the closing stages of 1981. Pan, the Greek god of shepherds, forests, wild life and fertility (a lot of portulaca to look after) also slipped into prominence when Giorgi Zarihi, supported by half a dozen fellow Rumanians, exhibited bravely on the Panflute (that instrument made of bamboo pipes with which Pan directed seductive sounds towards Syrinx and assorted other nymphs). Zarihi is a player of nimble lips and measurable breath, but his fellow artists, playing folk instruments like the cimbalon and some types of shawm, were no less skilled. The music evoked, of Rumanian folk origin (much of it from Transylvania, the vampire country) sounded a little less at home in a formal concert setting than it would have done in a Balkan wine-cellar or, for that matter, in a smoke Kings Cross restaurant.

The Pan-flute music was very old. At the other end of the time scale we heard recent music for piano duo played by Nigel Butterley and Deborah Pratt, those compositions — especially a sonata by Minkus Williamson and a piece by Felix Winder — seemed aimed at taking music by the scruff of its neck and worrying the life out of it. There was nothing here to charm the ear, and precious little to engage the mind, but there was much to fix the fingers into knots. In contrast there was some music, so-called, by the guru of American avant-garde John Cage, which was composed, so-called, by placing notes on music paper where the paper showed imperfections or where a throw of dice had indicated, not content with these chance events, Cage then leaves much of the timing and shape of the resultant piece to the whim of his performers. The actual sound was thin, with notes like molecules in outer space.

Contemporary music of a more conventional kind came by courtesy of the ABC Music of the Twentieth Century series, for which the excellent Polish-born American conductor Stanislaw Skrowaczewski took charge of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. In what was to have been the middle concert of the series, but turned out to be the last because industrial action in the Town Hall scuttled the third one, the program included music by another American patriot, Charles Ives, whose *Deception Day* showed how jolly polytonality can be, and by Stravinsky, whose complete *Pavane* proved that the full ballet contains much fine music that has escaped the notice. Soloist was Yuri Baskoff with the third of Prokofiev's piano concertos, a profane but harmless reading.

Having brought news of some exceedingly ancient and some relatively recent music, we shall spend a few paragraphs with the in-between one. Last, for example The South Pacific Lull Society, which pays tribute to its anonymous master about three times a year, presented a program of his ragas, played by such leading Sydney players as Gordon Wainwright, Sonya Hinkle, Elizabeth Powell, Tony Baldwin, Graeme Williams and Corey McVicar. These pieces need much diabolical digital dare-devy, the dangers are technical imprecision and rhythmical stiffness. Not all players overcome both of these dangers, but their rhaphanoid was easily entertaining. Also primarily a vehicle for entertainment, directed at the sub-teenage group of concert goers, was an ABC family concert which filled the Opera House Concert Hall. The formula for these concerts includes balloons floating down from where other balls have fallen, door prizes, and coloured lights — but there is also a scientific approach to programming, that

strange to combine easy enjoyment with value, this time, there were works like Saint-Saens' *Concert for The Animals*, with Benoit Collings as narrator, and Walker's *Cross Appared* besides the Alexander Saxe and Quiller's *Children's Overture*. The conductor Brian Auger introduced the music with comments that sometimes went other than the small-fry track, but the playing was credible.

A much more laudatory adjective must be reserved for the performance of Verdi's *Agnone* which the Sydney Philharmonia Society presented in a full Concert Hall. It was splendid, largely because conductor Carlo Felice Cifare, an expert on the specific intensity which inhibits this Requiem somewhat in the disfigurement of listeners who would prefer to regard it as an ecclesiastical document, directed it from memory with fine attention to detail, and an ability to provoke the Philharmonia Choir into full-hearted singing. They find themselves eager to sustain their pious tenors, but maintained a high standard as did the reinforced Australian Chamber Orchestra and a very finely balanced team of soloists in soprano Joan Casden, alto Luan Elm, tenor Anthony Benfell and bass Noel Mangin (the last two from New Zealand).

The smaller Philharmonia Motet Choir, conducted by Peter Skjeme, regressed about as far as a choir can go when singing a full mass using by a single composer, in performing the *Missa De Nostra Dame* written about 1364 by Guillaume de Machaut. The women used was "troubled" by Watson Evans, who paid attention to the arrangement, in a style and underlined the vocal lines, which in low because medieval church choirs excluded females with brass and percussion. Having made this solemn historical statement, the program then advanced to more recent Christmas music, stepping with the usual batch of Hodge notes and casual the progress of the season with upwards as significant as the first crocus in Kensington Gardens, the first meadow in spring, the fall of the first leaf in autumn, or the first children in winter.

Having thus got a foot inside the door, Santa Claus established his customary December dominance with sundry concern from all manner of academic and social institutions presenting programs often as subtle as the contents of a Christmas stocking, and almost all especially provided you were dutifully saturated with the appropriate Christmas spirit. There were, it is true, some exceptions to the soundable formula — four concerts by the Australian Chamber Orchestra prior to its first European tour, together with the really soon to be disbanded League Consort, for example — but you did not have to go very far to hear the voice of Handel's Messiah all over the land.

Invasions of Australia

by John McCullough

Battle's House by Thomas Kennedy
Curragy Press, pp 35.95
Legends on the Screen by John Tulloch
Curragy Press/Australian Film Institute

Bob Maza, introducing Thomas Kennedy's *Battle's House*, tells how he was sitting discussing the play's white limitations with a group of black colleagues, when a young girl spoke. "Isn't it a true story? If it's true and it's about our people, does it matter who writes it?" It's about us — about our ways. Isn't it? Certainly, from a white point of view the play has a great truth and it deals with an important story — the clash of black and white cultures in an island nation situation — with a discretion and clarity which is generally not there in recent Australian drama. Alongside the present preoccupation with struggle, removal, exile, absence, foreign and other subjects, Kennedy's earnest confrontation with such a powerful, immediately important subject is exciting.

In the play, Battle is torn between conflicting cultural interpretations of the fair which kills his women and blows down his house. In an attempt to resolve this, and to learn the "patterns" which seem to keep white civilisation together, he offers it as a gift to the whites, the most sacred knowledge of his tribe, in the form of the songs. The songs are magic, totemic objects which are never shown to whites or women. In return Battle expects to learn the sacred tribal secrets of the whites, but of course they haven't any and they don't understand the significance of Battle's gift. The final image of the play is of the woman Double sitting at front of the stage, with her wedding hanging on them, listening to the nearest thing whites can offer in the way of sacred cultural objects — a blaring transistor radio. As Ken Hester says in his introduction, it is a tragic, shocking conclusion.

Maza describes one performance of the Newrest production of *Battle's House* which was attended by ten tribal blacks from the reservation where it all originally happened. In the dance there was a further division between the tribal blacks whose experience was the basis of the story and the urban blacks, working on the white man's theatre, who were telling their own story as well. Maza writes, "I am told that



at a meeting back in their country they voted unanimously against the play. To me this is a pity. But then again I am not an isolated man." In this is another real image of a culture fragmented by what Kennedy calls the lack of imagination in the colonising, conquering whites.

John Tulloch's *Legends on the Screen* analyses a totally different sort of invasion: that of the Australian film industry of the 1930's by American producers, and of the Australian distribution networks by American films. It is for many people a highly emotive subject, and even in Tulloch's dense, complex and sometimes obscure account of it, a little passion manages occasionally to show through.

Legends on the Screen is a specialist work, the first of a series of monographs published jointly by Curragy Press and the Australian Film Institute. Sylvia Lawson sets the tone in her General Editor's Preface: "The series attempts to take up, and work on terms of, the new questions being asked about the relations of text and context, art and industry/story, society and culture, screen and audience." The general question, to whom it has not yet occurred to ask such questions, will find the book rather heavy going.

Many of Tulloch's central ideas, although not his methodologies, will be familiar to students of Australian drama and literature. There is legendary opposition of bush and city values, with the class, virtuous, pioneering spirit of the bush standing against the wicked, sophisticated cities, the harnessing of this opposition to melodramatic form, the

linking of melodrama and nationalism, as local melodramas began to try to protect the colourful Australian environment and the two faced separatism which resulted to — on the one hand looking for local audiences and on the other in the overseas market for whom the local colour was to be an advertisement for Australia. These are important issues in Australia's drama from the 1820's to the 1930's.

The industry, of course, is much more complex, being a commercial activity as well as a medium of communication as well as a form of art. For this reason many books on film get rather boring, for the layman, so concerned as they with matters of industrial politics, bureaucracy, money, percentages and profit. Tulloch's book is no exception, but the effort is worth it — concerned as he is to link the narrative conventions and structures of the film with the assumptions and politics in the industry that produced them. Not surprisingly, most of the artists' analysis is reserved for directors such as Raymond Longford and Franklyn Barrett, and much of the political and economic analysis for the distributors and exhibitors, as well as the American invaders.

The relations are most complex, but Tulloch brings a taste for relatively atypical films such as *A Southern Belle* and *The Breaking of the Bowels* which sometimes belie his apparently unprejudiced, structuralist approach. For the layman there is a warning indication to concentrate entirely on these "artistic" films and leave the rest of the buggers alone.



THE PERFORMING ARTS BOOKSHOP

2nd Floor, Crystal
Palace Arcade
590-592 George Street,
Sydney
Telephone: 267 2257

EURO HAIR CENTRE

Suite 511, 5th Floor,
381 Pitt St., Sydney
Telephone: 264-8183

HAIRPIECES — WIGS —
BEARDS — MUSTACHES —
SIDEBURNS FOR THEATRE,
FILM & TELEVISION

All creative work
Handmade in our own workshop
by experienced craftsmen.

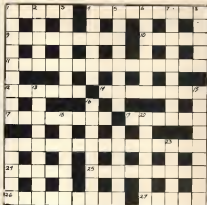
COMPARE OUR PRICES
Telephone: 264 8183

T.A.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES Australia

\$24.00 POST FREE for twelve issues
Get a gift subscription and SAVE!
\$26.00 for new subscriptions
\$25.00 for renewals

THESPIA'S PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 38.



Name: _____
Address: _____
Postcode: _____

The first correct entry drawn on February 28
will receive one year's free subscription to
TA.

ACROSS

- 1 Copies in museum I'm especially interested in (5)
- 4 Cousin, perhaps — a southern relative colloquially amusing (9)
- 9 I test dust severely, so they're pointless (5)
- 10 Place for a doctor? (5)
- 11 Somehow, I curb Linda for a D-Day heroism (7,8)
- 12 Introduce point on stall (6)
- 14 Alight on functions of geographical exploitation (4,6)
- 15 One of a different sort of 18, not far away (8)
- 19 A letter of about 50 could be dangerous (8)
- 22 Completely remade kingdom, might it be said? Hardly! (4,5,6)
- 24 Grassland where twice the number go for a drink (5)
- 25 Have nurse round to parcel up the body man (9)
- 26 Blasted process has had an inclination (9)
- 27 Pays attention to composition of 2 (5)

DOWN

- 1 Award for remarkably limited lion (9)
- 2 Air of Terpsichore, for example (5)
- 3 He does it to go round walls, the spider (7)
- 4 Quakes can cause cry of alarm (4)
- 5 Declaration of call for desert, we hear (3,5)
- 6 Hold up song in action (7)
- 7 Hidden for characters on the side in a well-known (9)
- 8 Frosted accompaniment (5)
- 11 Thus the Frenchman and the Scot reach the point where they become islanders (9)
- 15 Debris of revolutionary is enough to cause shell shock
- 16 I alternate an area here (8)
- 18 You were too troubled, he became a miser (7)
- 20 Mock light on round the circle (7)
- 21 Face up under fishing net in (8)
- 22 Damaged, but preserved in alcohol, Edward (6)
- 23 Up to a point, I permit shelter (5)



WELCOME THE BRIGHT WORLD

BY STEPHEN SEWELL

nimrod *World Premiere 27th January 1982* nimrod

DIRECTOR: NEIL ARMFIELD

DESIGNER: EAMON D'ARCY

COMPOSER: SARAH DE JONG

CAST: BRANDON BURKE CATHY DOWNES MICHELE FAWCEN KATRINA FOSTER MAX GILLES MARTIN HARRIS

RUSSELL NEWMAN BARRY OTTO



'With the derricks up above us and the solid earth below,
we're waiting at the lever for the word to let her go.'

A. B. Paterson

Bingo Paterson penned those lines for a colourful poem over 80 years ago.

At that time, he could hardly have guessed that they would aptly describe the feelings of oilmen now working in a region often frequented by himself.

In an area 600 kilometres west of Rockhampton – known to geologists as the Cabbage Basin – there's a tiny town called Inisford.

The local pub is called 'Clancy's Offshore'. The river nearby – the

Bischoff – flows in the well-known Bingo Paterson tale 'A Bush Christening'.

It's close to this town that has such strong associations with Bingo Paterson that Esso and its co-venturers are drilling the first test well in one of the largest on-shore oil exploration programs Australia has ever seen.

Together, Esso and its co-venturers expect to invest more than \$60,000,000 in the Cabbage Basin on seismic studies

and a drilling programme.

As with all such exploration programs there is no guarantee of success. Oil, however, is vital to Australia's future, so the search for it – although costly – must continue.



Energy for Australia

100204